

S E R M O N S

O N

VARIOUS INTERESTING SUBJECTS,

PREACHED

IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF LEWISHAM,
IN KENT.

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L O N D O N:

SOLD BY C. DILLY, IN THE POULTRY.

M D C C L X X V I I I .



P R E F A C E.

TH E following Discourses appear as they were delivered from the pulpit. The time which custom has at present allotted to sermons, will be an apology, if they do not abound in scripture criticism, abstract reasoning, or in points of speculative theology.

The Author professes to have framed them according to his best judgment of the holy scriptures, and with the warmest wish that they might affect the heart: he trusts that no sentiment has found admission among them, but which the church of England, wherein he serves as a minister, has sanctioned, and will justify.

They uniformly proceed upon the orthodox principle, that man is fallen from his original perfection; that the Saviour, who
came

iv P R E F A C E.

came into this world to restore him, is God; and that human redemption is a consequence of his infinite merit, and all-sufficient atonement.

From these principles, the duties of morality are as uniformly pressed upon the practice of all who receive them.

E R R A T A.

Page 190, l. 1, *for* servant, *read* servants.

318, l. 10, — Son, — Holy Ghost.

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bery*

X C O N T E N T S.

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SERMON

S E R M O N I.

YOUTH INVITED TO EARLY PIETY.

PROV. xxiii. 26.

My son, give me thine heart.

THIS is the address of Wisdom to youth : to obey it is to be happy ; to refuse obedience is to be undone. It is reasonable, when God addresses us, that we should listen with devout attention ; for we may be assured that he is wise in what he directs, and good in all he ordains. He who formed us knows well the present state of our nature ; he knows how much it is debased from its original perfection, and the power that is requisite to renovate the heart.

Our degeneracy is in nothing more obvious than in the want of an affectionate
B attachment

attachment to the Author of our being. The moment we are capable of making any reflections upon the objects around us, so soon do we begin to take pleasure in their variety, and to have our affections engaged towards such of them as appear the most pleasing and lovely. Such partialities are natural, and they are innocent : but what an addition would it be to our happiness, if from the very dawn of reason, we could carry up our first regards to the great Former of all we see, and of all we enjoy !

He asks for our hearts in youth, before the false blandishments of pleasure have engaged our affections, or the confirmed habits of vice have debased our souls. And consider, my brethren, what a lovely thing it is for youth to listen betimes to the voice of God ; to say with the pious young Samuel, with a disposition to obey, " Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." To attach ourselves to God in our early days is a work of true wisdom. It will fit us to meet, with an equality of mind, all the diversified occurrences of our succeeding lives, and to cherish the sublimest hopes of a blessed immortality. You perceive from
my

my introduction, that this discourse is chiefly intended for the younger part of this audience; though, I trust, some hints may be offered of considerable importance to those of more advanced years, and useful even to such as have arrived at the eleventh hour.

The motives which should induce youth to comply with the invitation of my text are various, important, and interesting; and first, the infinite and glorious nature of God himself, who asks for your hearts.

Young men! have you ever reflected seriously upon his infinite power? have you considered the operation of his hands? You acknowledge, doubtless, that God made all things; but have you deliberately considered what an inconceivably wise and mighty God he must be who made all things? What think you of the globe on which you live? the solid contents of which are nearly two hundred and sixty-five thousand millions of miles,—launched into the infinitude of space like a ball in the air,—supported by no visible cause,—suspended as in a balance by the word only of the great Creator? For

nearly six thousand years, this globe has been in motion, turning at a rate of more than a thousand miles an hour, and yet scarcely deviating an hair's breadth from its path in so many ages. You behold it furnished with every thing that can delight your eyes, that can charm your taste, that can gratify every sense. Have you considered God in all these things? The wisest and most accomplished man that ever existed is not equal to the task of making a single blade of grass. It is God who made all, and that filleth all things living with plenteousness. Have you considered the heavens, the work of his hands; the sun, and the moon, and the stars, which he has created? Here indeed, as we rise nearer and nearer to his eternal throne, the shortness of our sight, and our limited conceptions, stop the ardour of our inquiries. We behold the sun, we feel his influence, we rejoice in his rays: but, be not surprised when you are told, that were this whole globe on which we live to fall into the sun, it would not be so perceivable to an eye at our distance as the smallest spot we now see on the face of the moon. Our knowledge of the other heavenly bodies is comparatively small. The immense distances of
vision many

many of them put it beyond the power of the most distinguished astronomer to say any thing decidedly; but it appears a reasonable presumption, from several considerations, that every fixed star in the heavens is a sun, and has its own system to light, to warm, and to invigorate. In wisdom God has made them all; and yet he stoops to ask your hearts.

Consider him further in your own being, as distinct from all inferior animals,—erect in your attitude, formed to look towards the heaven of heavens where your Maker resides, from whence you derive that immortal part of you, which forms the glory of your nature, which raises you in dignity above all other earthly creatures, and destined to live in a future and better world. David, whose knowledge of the economy of the human frame was comparatively small, exclaimed with astonishment, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made!” Those judicious and intelligent men, who have made the anatomy of the human body their particular study, have discovered such exquisite contrivance in the several parts, such a just arrangement and harmony of the whole, such a combination of remote, and yet indis-

penfably requisite circumftances, concurring to animate, to preferve, to invigorate, and to give beauty to this complicated machine, that they have been at a lofs to exprefs their profound veneration for the wifdom, and the power, of the glorious God ;—and yet he deigns to ask for your hearts.

Have you confidered this God, not only in the wonders of creation, but in the adminiftration of his providence? You owe to him not only your being, but every good thing from whence you derive your prefent innocent pleasures, or from whence you hope for your future happinefs. It is he that keeps your blood warm in your veins, that bleffes you with a rapid and chearful flow of animal fpirits, that ftrews the path of your youth with fo many pleafing flowers, and who “ gives you all things richly to enjoy.” You are to confider him as ever prefent with you, privy to the fecrets of your fouls, and having the whole feries of your actions naked and open before him. “ Whither,” fays the Pfalmift, “ fhall I fly from thy prefence, whither efcape from thy power? if I go up to heaven, thou art there,”—worfhipped with the adoration of prostrate cherubim

cherubim and seraphim, who are incessantly employed in hymning the glories of thine eternal Godhead : “ if I go down to hell, thou art there,” ruling thine enemies with a rod of iron, vindicating the honour of thy justice upon rebel angels, and upon the spirits of unbelieving and disobedient men : “ if I take the wings of the morning, and flee unto the uttermost parts of the earth, there thine hand shall lead me, and thy right hand uphold me.”——With what pleasure should you hold correspondence with this God, who is thus so near every one of you : what a restraint should it lay upon your appetites, what a curb should it be to your passions ; how should a sense of his presence stimulate you to walk holy, and unblameably before him ; what an argument should it be with you to surrender to him, who is thus acquainted with the whole frame of your nature, those hearts which he asks of you !——“ My son, give me thine heart.”

Consider again, what he hath done for you in redemption. That nature, which he formed pure, and holy, and happy, became corrupted fallen, and miserable. The soul, which he breathed into man, became defiled by sin, lost

its primitive purity, its attachment to God, and all those marks of love and devotion, which distinguished its heavenly origin. Upon man, offending, helpless, and wretched, the Lord looked down from heaven; he looked upon this creature, who had so wantonly abused his favour, insulted his being, violated his attributes, and incurred the penalty of death; he looked, but it was with a determination to afford him that help which he alone could afford; and to make him a subject of a salvation, which his arm alone could bring. Like all his other works, this also is formed to astonish, and to confound the understanding. The Godhead himself descends to take upon him the human form; to reanimate our nature with a pure emanation of the divinity; to capacitate a second Adam for the fulfilment of a law, which sentenced all its transgressors to condemnation. Behold in Jesus Christ this person, taking the manhood into God; pursuing upon this earth the path of universal righteousness; accommodating himself to all the innocent infirmities of humanity; exposing himself to all the various temptations which beset mankind in this vale of tears; enduring all, that he might know
how

how to succour those who are tempted, that he might know how to administer comfort to the dejected penitent, and pour into the breast betrayed by the fierce assaults of Satan, that salutary balm which alone can heal the agonizing conscience, and give peace to the wounded in heart. Behold him, to give stability to the wavering in faith, displaying his power over all nature; restoring with a word those who had long pressed the couch of sickness and disease,—controuling the elements,—wresting from the jaws of death its lawful prey. These exertions, whilst they demonstrate his good-will to man, surely bespeak your submission, your gratitude, and your love. These are what he requires of you, when he says, “My son, give me thine heart.”

But the means of your salvation were not provided only by the unspotted holiness of his life. The foundation of your faith and trust in him is not only laid in his mighty words, and mighty works; not only in what he did, but, in what he suffered. The conflict he sustained in the garden,—the bitterness of that cup which he drank there,—the dreadful agonies he endured when he died upon the cross,
finished

finished the scene, disarmed the divine justice, expiated human guilt, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Ascended to the right hand of God, possessed of all power, he now lives to intercede in your behalf, to plead your cause, and to obtain for you every blessing of which you can stand in need. He not only has removed the sentence of condemnation, by satisfying every demand of justice; but the blessings of an immortal life, all the glories of that kingdom where he reigns, he promises to you, if you comply with the invitation of my text,—if you give him your hearts. Consider then, from the whole economy of creation, of providence, and grace, of what importance you are in the estimation of God. Other creatures are brought into being; they soon arrive at maturity; their little all they receive at once,—they live and they die: but your state is a state of probation, you are in training for a future state; your Creator desires that your future state may be happy; he has done all that is proper to make it so; he affords you the means of grace,—in giving you his Son, he gives you the hope of glory. Does he not then make a reasonable request when he asks your hearts? Ought you

you not without reserve to obey him? Choose ye this day whom ye will serve: if the Lord be God, serve him; but if Baal, if the world and its pleasures—you have your choice; but you cannot serve both!

“ You have already perhaps, began to taste of the joys of sense; to be whirled in the all-absorbing vortex of pleasure: you are giddy with the gay objects which you meet with, whilst you hurry from diversion to diversion, and from scene to scene. If so, your hearts are pre-occupied. The Almighty asks you for them, but they are gone; you have surrendered them to another: but alas! you have surrendered them at the expence of the Gospel of Christ; you have surrendered blessings inestimable in their value—blessings which have been highly prized, graciously recommended, ardently sought, and perseveringly cultivated by the wisest and the best of men—men who have sacrificed their all, rather than forego these noble enjoyments. But you, and you too who are arrived at manhood, to a mature age, you are ready to give up the dignity and excellence of your nature, to resign your hopes of a future immortality, in order to justify to
yourselves

yourself your deplorable perversion of taste; but your attempts are in vain; there is something within you that is in the interest of your souls; there is something within you which tells you at this very moment that you are unhappy, that you have forfeited the sublimest pleasures in refusing to give your hearts to God. You have perhaps often in secret sighed, to think what you lost when you gained the world and its favour. When you look back on your early youth, on the lovely scenes of childhood, before your minds were possessed with guilty pleasures, do you not inwardly wish you could recall those blessed days, at least that you could regain that peace and ease which you then enjoyed. When you see other young persons, of religious characters and irreproachable morals, cheerful and happy, respected by men, and beloved of God, do you not envy their situation, and in the comparison feel your own misery? You may, perhaps, in the hours of giddy riot, in the circle of your boon companions, be false enough to disguise such feelings, to deny the deep convictions of your souls, and to boast of the charms of that life which overwhelms you with secret sorrow."

Are

Are you not conscious of any such uneasy feelings or reflections as these? If you are, would it not be wise to change your course, to devote yourselves to true repentance, to seek the pardoning mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and henceforth to surrender to him your hearts?

What I have said in this discourse may have its use to persons of more advanced age. You have an opportunity of reflecting upon your past lives; of making a true estimate of its joys and its sorrows. Perhaps you have with Solomon tried every expedient to gratify; you have pursued every object that could inspire you with sanguine expectation, or promise you permanent felicity: you have tried all, and what is the amount? what is the balance in favour of earthly happiness, when you throw off the mortifying alloy of disappointment, of disgust, of satiety? Perhaps the objects you coveted have eluded your anxious pursuit; or, if overtaken, you have found them fleeting. Your fortunes have been subject to vicissitude, your dearest domestic joys to a sad interruption, your health to languor and decline; and now what
awaits

awaits you but the "deep damp vault, the mattock, and the tomb."—Say then, ye that are deeply versed in the joys of the world, and its most desirable good, what are the decisions of your hoary hairs? Will ye not say, that man is blessed who maketh God his portion, who in the prime of life gives him his heart? Yes, this, ye youth, is the language of experience, the language of wisdom; listen to its powerful voice, consecrate your first days to God, give him your hearts: let them be moulded and fashioned agreeably to his holy will, and sacred word; acknowledge him in all your ways. Never lose sight of this important truth, that he is about your path, and about your bed, and that he spieth out all your ways. Do not imagine that the sacred calls of religion are intended to deprive you of the most valuable endearments of this world: No! "Seek ye first," said your Saviour, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."—The gospel of Christ, so far from checking, gives a sublime expansion to all the powers of the soul; an expansion which not only comprehends the present world and its purest joys, but futurity and its glories. Cultivate,

vate, then, a firm faith in the blessed Jesus, through whom you see all the attributes of the Godhead becoming interested in your favour, and combining for your salvation. Study the character of Jesus Christ: "Let the same mind be in you," says the apostle, "which was also in Christ Jesus." In the imitation of this divine example you will indeed feel an humble consciousness of your unworthiness, and insufficiency; but this reflection will at all times afford you pleasure—That he ever lives, not only to give grace to assist you in every effort towards salvation, but to intercede for you in those instances, in which perhaps your best intentions may be defeated by your weakness, and all your warmest endeavours prove that you are but men. Give him your hearts, persevere in well-doing, and God will bestow upon you, for the sake of his Son, a glorious recompence of reward, a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away.

...than, a man like in the blessed Jesus,
...all the world is to the
...in your favour,
...and commanding for your salvation, ...
...of Jesus Christ: "I am the true vine"
...you," says the apostle, "which was also
...the vine of Jesus," is the vine of this divine
...you will indeed find an infinite con-
...of your unworthiness, and insuffi-
...but the collection will be all there
...you please—I that he ever lives, and
...to give you to what you are every day
...towards salvation, but no interests for you in
...instances, in which perhaps, our best in-
...may be destroyed by your weakness, and
...and your warmth cannot give you what you are
...but men. Give them your best, believe
...in well doing, and God will show upon you
...for the sake of the son, a reward recompense
...of heaven, a crown of righteousness that fadeth
...not away.

S E R M O N II*.

THE POWER AND COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

ST. LUKE, vii. 13.

*And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion
on her, and said unto her, Weep not.*

WE usually venerate those characters,
whose merits have raised them to a
peculiar degree of eminence;—especially, if
we are allied to them by blood, or are encou-
raged to form great expectations from them.

If they have left the world, the recollec-
tion of their worth impresses us with plea-
sure—nor do their partiality and attention
ever pass through our minds without exciting
some corresponding sentiments of affection and
gratitude.

* Preached in favour of a number of female children,
educated and cloathed.

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In

In the review of the history of our blessed Saviour, we are furnished with a character, in which centres every excellence. A character, which, whilst it possesses every thing that can claim our admiration, is held forth to us for purposes which demand our love.

The page of history swells with the names of heroes, the glare of whose actions once filled the world with astonishment. But, wherein did they excel?—Was it in forming plans for the security of the common rights of mankind?—Was it in cultivating and perpetuating the milder arts of peace?—Was it in setting an example of moderation, of self-denial, of humanity, of social love?—No!—in none of these. If we trace the footsteps of these mighty conquerors, how are they distinguished? We must wade through blood, we must see the populous cities burned with fire; the unoffending inhabitants enslaved or put to the sword; the peaceful villages razed; whole regions made the prey of desolation. The widows left to mourn over the ruins of their country; their husbands put to the sword, their children in captivity.—Blessed Jesus! how different thy conquests! Thy titles to
fame

fame are thine own:—thy footsteps were the footsteps of mercy and compassion. Thou hast rejoiced with them that rejoiced; thou hast mourned with those that wept!

In whatever point of view you place this character, it shines with equal lustre; beneficence, and love towards the children of men, are the glory which surrounds it. He is here seen in the very spirit of that text, which describes him as going about doing good, and combining in himself consummate wisdom, irresistible power, and matchless benevolence.

His wisdom appeared in the subjects of his miracles. They were the most proper. They were usually in those peculiar circumstances of distress, which, whilst they claimed his attention, at the same time evidenced his discernment. He knew that the situation of man required wonderful qualifications in the person who assumed the character of a Saviour; these qualifications he discovered, that they might have strong consolation who flee to him as the hope set before them.

He had, on the preceding day, sent a cure

C 2

to

to the centurion's servant, at the request of his believing master. His power on earth was by no means limited to his bodily presence; and from hence we are encouraged to believe, that tho' the heavens have received him out of our sight, he still continues altogether acquainted with our necessities, and still retains the disposition and power to supply them.

He was now going towards the city of Nain, and many of his disciples were with him, and much people.

The works of darkness require secrecy.—We have heard of miracles, which have been obviously calculated to impose on the ignorant, the credulous, and the unwary: such miracles have not pretended to the advantage of light when they have been performed, nor to any number of witnesses to attest their certainty; they have generally been manufactured in convents, in cells, or in deserts, where the evidences have been few, and those cautiously chosen; such only as were plainly interested in the ends to be served by them—the gratification of their pride, their authority, or their avarice.

Our

Our blessed Saviour, on the contrary, purposely placed himself, when he wrought his miracles, in such situations, that the whole transaction might be exposed to the face of day; open to the severest scrutiny of the surrounding multitude. Much people followed him. “ And when he came nigh the gate of the city, “ behold there was a dead man carried out, the “ only son of his mother, and she was a widow, “ and much people of the city were with her.”

The two parties met at the gate of the city, and joined together on this sorrowful occasion.

Amongst the beautiful passages of holy writ, it is, I believe, difficult to find one that possesses more amiable simplicity in the narrative, or greater power to touch the secret springs of the soul, than this before us. The incidents, as they succeed each other, rise in their importance; they fix the mind at last to a single point, and keep all the passions in an anxious and awful suspense. Here is a funeral with a long train of mourners; a widow follows, and follows under all those circumstances of distress, which could possibly conspire to render her inconsolable. Her husband was

gone—gone to the spot, it is probable, unto which her son was now conveying. Her son did I say? There was something more. He was the only son of his mother! The single pledge of virtuous affection, in whom she had seen his father's image reflected; the staff of her old age; the only—the last comfort of her life! There was no child left to sooth her anguish, or to divert the current of her woe! He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow! In the progress of this melancholy procession, Jesus drew near the gate of the city.

Allow me to remark, that there could be no ground of collusion. The meeting was, to outward appearance, accidental; it must have been altogether so, except in the intention of Jesus Christ.—Of him it is recorded, that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Let his conduct on this occasion attest the truth. When Jesus saw this scene of deep distress, he was moved with compassion. He gave way to all the soft emotions of humanity, and said unto the woman, “Weep not.” It is a circumstance worth your attention, that the union of the multitude which followed Jesus, with the
company

company of mourners, formed a concourse, it is probable, of several hundreds; and yet there was but one among them that could raise the dead! and happily for this disconsolate widow there was one. Had the whole world been convened, there could not have been found another. And as he had the power, so he possessed the disposition: he drew near to the woman, and said unto her, "Weep not." He approached the bier and touched it, and they that bare him stood still. In this moment we will suppose the poor widow throwing aside her veil to see the stranger who interested himself thus deeply in her affliction; the eyes of the whole multitude are fixed on Jesus; their anxiety is awakened for the event: amidst this silent, sorrowful suspense, our blessed Saviour, without any parade, without any ostentatious ceremony, gives way at once to his compassion and his power: he says, in a tone of uncontrollable authority—"Young man, I say unto thee, "arise!—And he that was dead sat up and "began to speak; and he delivered him to his "mother."

We have heard much of the painter's pencil,

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and

and of its powers,—but here the happiest efforts of human ingenuity must fail;—this scene is not for the canvass;—it must glow in the imagination; it is for the heart alone;—it is for the parent's heart.—He delivered him to his mother.

Some of you, perhaps can feel how highly you should have esteemed such a gift; you have gone through the former part of this scene: a bosom-friend, or a favourite child has sickened; your fears have taken the alarm, and you had cause: you have seen death making his slow but sure approaches; you have addressed Heaven, with all the importunity of prayer, to avert the blow: your prayers have been unavailing; life has sat trembling upon the pale lip of your child, his eyes have closed upon you for ever. In that sad hour, had you been asked, what was the first wish of your heart, it would have centered in one object. The world had lost its charms, riches their influence, the sparks of ambition were extinguished; all appeared of no value, trifling, insignificant. Could you have been indulged in the predominant wish of your souls, it would have been expressed in
this

this short sentence, Let the grave give up her dead.—This was the situation of the widow in my text, in whose favour Jesus said, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.”

But you have lost your children, or your friends, and there has been no Jesus at hand to bind up your wound—to bid you dry up your tears—to stop the bier, and to restore them again to your fond embrace.—What then! Has our text no comfort for you? Are you Christians, and are there no gleams of hope piercing through this gloom of death? Fix yourselves at the gates of Nain: Who is this that sees a disconsolate widow in tears and has compassion on her?—It is Jesus! Who is this that says to the dead, Arise?—It is Jesus! Who is this whom death obeys?—It is Jesus! He who was, and who is, and who is to come—the Almighty!—Jesus Christ! the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.—Be assured, Christians, that he who raised this widow's son, has power and authority to raise yours. “He that believeth on me,” said he at the grave of Lazarus, “though he were dead, yet shall he live.”—I say unto thee, thy brother, thy friend, thy child shall rise again! Ye shall see that cold, pale, lifeless corpse again;
ye

ye shall behold the thick film done away from those eyes which you so lately saw closed in death ! new life shall diffuse itself throughout that body, and eternal youth bloom afresh upon those pallid cheeks !—Yes !—“ I am the “ resurrection and the life,” saith the Lord. The time is coming, when the Archangel’s trumpet shall be heard, and the dead in Christ shall arise. They shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they shall live for ever.

Do you doubt the ability of Jesus to do this ? Place yourselves beside the only son of his mother,—hear him say to the dead, “ Arise ! ”—See death obedient to his word, and be not faithless, but believe !

There is another aspect in which the text may be viewed, with great encouragement to pious parents.

It is not a very uncommon case, that such, although they have children, yet are frequently under the deepest affliction on account of their spiritual sickness and moral death. Ye are believers in Christ, but they are faithless : you have been quickened together with him,

him, but they are dead in trespasses and sins. Often you have poured out your prayers for them before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; often have you intreated, that He who caused light to shine out of darkness, would shine into their hearts, and grant them the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; often you have uttered forth, in broken accents, language like that of the supplicating patriarch, "Oh! that Ismael may live before thee!" And yet all is dark, gloomy, unpromising. Well; Jesus is still compassionate. He still heareth prayer; he hath received gifts for men; he ever lives to make intercession. Ye observe that the blessing bestowed on the widow in my text was reserved unto the last. Do not despair. Persevere in faith and prayer, your child shall be given you. Jesus will say, "Young man, I say unto thee, 'Arise!'" and the prodigal shall return. He that is now morally dead shall be restored to spiritual life, and tell of the loving-kindness of the Lord.

But, say some of you, this is not of general application: we have our friends, and we love them—our children, and they are 'pious and dutiful;

dutiful; we are strangers to the losses you have been describing. True!—And are you under fewer obligations? has Jesus been less attentive to you, in affording you the uninterrupted enjoyment of these blessings? has he not saved you the distress which you see involving an afflicted, widowed mother at the gates of Nain? Yes, he has known the wishes of your hearts, and he has granted them! You have asked for the good things of this life, and you have had them! you have asked for children, and like olive-branches they have crowded around your tables! you have asked for friends, and they have been your's! you have asked for long life, and God has granted your prayers! He has done all these things for you, and has gratitude no claims?—You have it in your power to shew your gratitude to-day. The compassion of Jesus Christ to the widow of Nain, should instruct you in those dispositions which are most agreeable to him, and most lovely in the estimation of mankind. He has left us an example that we should follow his steps. “He that will be my disciple,” said he, “must follow me.” Follow him! How went he? They who had an opportunity
of

of knowing tell us, "He went about doing
"good." Ye cannot indeed copy after him
in healing all manner of diseases and infirmi-
ties with a word; ye cannot raise the dead!—
but, ye can indulge the dispositions of com-
passion; ye can cultivate the habits of hu-
manity. Do you know a widow in distress?
you cannot raise her son, but you can contri-
bute something to her support: though you
cannot intirely dry up her tears, you can lessen
the number of them. You cannot rescue the
orphan from the grave; but, there is some-
thing within your power—you can become an
instrument of saving him from falling into the
grave. "Ye know the grace of our Lord
"Jesus, who, though he was rich, yet for
"our sakes he became poor, that we, through
"his poverty, might be made rich." He was
very poor, and we read but of little he did as
to pecuniary helps. He could be moved with
compassion—he could sooth the distressed—
he could heal the sick, and raise the dead,
whilst he himself, more destitute than the
foxes who have holes, or the birds of the air
who have nests, had not where to lay his head.

His circumstances were so confined, that
we

we read of some pious women who ministered to his necessities ; and yet there is a little anecdote of him, which is not often observed, though it describes him in his usual habits, as to objects of charity. The night before his crucifixion he addressed himself to Judas, saying, “ What thou doest, do quickly ? ” The disciples heard the charge, and inform us, that they supposed, that as Judas had the bag containing the small stock belonging to this little society, that Jesus had bidden him give something to the poor. So that, although he had but little, very little, yet it was his custom to give of that little.

Need it be urged then what will be expected from you, whom he hath blessed with a competency, or enriched with abundance ? I trust it need not : ye know what he hath said, “ He who soweth plentifully shall reap plentifully.”

Were I inclined to work upon your passions to-day, were I disposed to take the advantage of those sensibilities which do honour to human nature, I should, perhaps, intreat you to suppose one or other of those silent, modest
petitioners

petitioners your own. I would imagine you sunk into poverty, unable to protect them from the paths of vice and infamy ; I would suppose you stealing into this assembly, watching the generous emotions of pity, as they spread from heart to heart, and from eye to eye. I would represent you as exulting in the prospect of that resource which your destitute children had formed in the bounty of this congregation—in that guard placed around their virtue, to secure them from the ravages of wicked and abandoned men—in that plan formed by the disinterested benevolence of the promoters of this charity, to bring them up in the knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ ; to render them useful members of society, and to lead them on in those good ways, which are so immediately connected with their present peace and immortal happiness.

Having thus prevailed on you to view them with a parent's eye, in those interesting moments of sympathy and commiseration, I might suggest to you this seasonable advice of our benevolent Master, “ Whatsoever you would that men
“ should do unto you, do ye even so unto
“ them.”

“ them.” The charity you approve in others, I should exhort you to imitate: what you would desire your own, in like circumstances, should receive, that, I would say, do you bestow to-day.

All this might be necessary, were you less disposed to give. But in a Christian congregation, the confessed dependants upon the bounty of God, the candidates for the Divine mercy, such methods of gaining you to our interests, I trust, are unnecessary. It is sufficient that the example of our blessed Master, and the sanction of that religion which he taught, invite you to your duty, and press you to “ put on, as the beloved of God, bowels “ of mercy.”

Let me bring you once more to take a view of Jesus Christ. You have seen in the text, what is confirmed in the whole of the Redeemer's life, that in him were united wonderful power and ineffable compassion. The laws of nature were under his controul, and were made subservient to his goodness.

He was possessed of every disposition hat
could

could endear him to the distressed, of every virtue that could have a tendency to overcome the prejudices of men, and gain them to the imitation of so divine an example.—And yet he was crucified! That gracious person, who said to the widow of Nain, “Weep not,” who mingled his tears with hers, who gave her dead son alive again to her bosom, was at last nailed to the cross! He who said, “Young man, arise!” said also “I thirst.” He received in vinegar, mingled with gall, the last testimony of human ingratitude. But whither am I led? Is it from the gates of Nain to the top of Calvary?—Well, here we see Jesus in another point of view, but still compassionate! Yes, here mercy, the darling attribute of God, rose to its summit. At Nain he raised a widow’s son, to restore peace to her breast! At Jerusalem he died himself, to restore peace to us all! “We are reconciled unto God,” says an apostle, “by the death of his Son.”—As he then hath loved us, and given himself for us, it only remains that we now shew, agreeably to his commandment, that we love one another. The children before you, look up to you to-day as their benefac-

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tors.

tors. Their wants are known to you : their hands are stretched out to receive your charity. Disappoint not their expectations ; let them not look in vain.

S E R M O N III.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM.

HEB. xi. 17.

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac : and he that had received the promises, offered up his only son.

IT has been often observed, that the New Testament is a key to the Old. The observation is just. To the New we are indebted for an explanation of many points of great importance, which, without it, must have remained veiled in darkness.

In this chapter, which contains a summary of

of the triumphs of faith over the sufferings of many of the venerable patriarchs and holy prophets, we cannot wonder to find Abraham, "the friend of God," standing foremost among those, who, "through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises; stopped the mouths of lions; quenched the violence of fire; escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness were made strong; waxed valiant in fight; turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

This memorable instance of faith, unto which the text refers, as having justly intitled Abraham to the character of the "father of the faithful," we find in the 22d of Genesis, to the whole of which I shall at this time request your attention.

"It came to pass, after these things," says the sacred writer, "that God did tempt Abraham."

After he had quitted his country, his kindred, and his father's house, in search of a strange land, implicitly following the divine providence, not knowing whither he went:
after

after having had the most express declarations of his Maker's favour, having pleaded with him face to face in the behalf of the devoted cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and having received the assurance that his intercession should prevail, if there were found but ten righteous in them : after having received the promise of a son in his old age, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, whose seed should equal the stars of the firmament for multitude : after having beheld the birth of this child, in whom all his hopes of a numerous posterity centred, growing up with him as a tender plant, whose branches were to overspread the whole earth :—" after these things, God did tempt Abraham."

In meeting with this sentence, " God did tempt," we should be careful to preserve our ideas free from every thing that is objectionable in the sense of it, when we apply it to God. To tempt sometimes signifies to lead into a crime; but when a person is thus tempted, an apostle admonishes us, " Let no man when he is tempted say, I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted to evil, neither tempteth he any man." But to tempt signifies also to try

a man. Thus the apostle uses the word in the text, “ By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac ;” and in this sense God may be said to tempt men, or try them, sometimes in his displeasure, sometimes in his *love*. When he permits sinners to fall, as a punishment for their abuse and misapplication of the benefits and blessings bestowed upon them, when their wilful impieties are followed by the chastisements of his awakened justice, then it is that he tries them in his *displeasure*.

But when he permits his servants to be surrounded with dangers, from which he can deliver them with honour to his own attributes; when, in order to distinguish their faith, and to render their obedience more amiable; when he designs to crown their perseverance with his approbation, and finally to bless their integrity; when, under these circumstances, he suffers their faith to be proved, their graces to be exercised, their integrity to be attended with any discouraging circumstances, then it is that he tempts or tries them in his *love*. Thus he tempted Abraham.

“ And God said unto him, Abraham. And
he

he said, Behold here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

What a dreadful gradation is here! The manner in which the command is uttered seems to aggravate its severity. Take now thy son, the son of thy bosom, who is a part of thyself! thine only son! the child of thine old age! the support of thy declining years! thine Isaac, of whom Sarah thy wife is so passionately fond! whom thou lovest; whom thou hast so often, with all the fondness of an aged parent, beheld upon thy knees; whom thou hast so often clasped to thy bosom, as the comfort and glory of thy hoary head!—take thine Isaac, and offer him a sacrifice upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee of.

Of all the afflictions unto which human nature can be subjected, surely this was the most afflicting!

It would be natural to have recourse
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to every consideration, to soften or evade such an injunction.

The dictates of reason would have justified some degree of hesitation. The most specious arguments might have been offered to obstruct his obedience. The firm remonstrances of nature, that endearing nature, which unites an affectionate father and a dutiful child by the most tender and indissoluble bonds, might have opposed its execution. The apparent contradiction between this command, and the former promises, offered a powerful plea against a compliance. How could God be faithful to his word, if in this instance he was obeyed? Where would be the stability of his promises, if the very person unto whom they were made, must be thus chosen as the instrument to frustrate them? How could he believe that Isaac would be the comfort of his old age, if he were thus compelled to an act which would send his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? By what means could the promised seed become numerous as the stars of heaven, when in his son he must inevitably sacrifice all the nations which were to spring from him? Might we not expect to see the venerable Abraham
sinking

sinking beneath the insupportable weight of his disappointment, overwhelmed by the irreparable loss of all he held most dear and valuable in the world! Abraham triumphed over all these considerations; his character rises in dignity by his difficulties: the faithful patriarch staggered not; he believed, and obeyed.

For behold, the good old man rises early in the morning, to set about this awful business. He takes two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son: he clave the wood for a burnt-offering, and went towards the place of which God had told him. “And on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.” He lift up his eyes! which in the course of this painful journey had been lost to every object around him; fixed on the ground, it is probable, lest the gushing tear, which he found himself unable to suppress, should call for an explanation. He saw from far the dreadful spot, where it is likely the divine presence awaited his coming; where some token caught the patriarch’s eye, and pointed to the place of sacrifice.

“Tarry ye here,” said he to his servants,
“whilst

“ whilst I and the lad go yonder to worship. And Abraham took the wood for the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife: and they went both of them together.”

“ And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father : and he said, Here I am, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering ?”—Dreadful shock to the fortitude of a tender parent ! The heart alone can comment upon these words. One must be a father, one must be a tender father ! one must have an only and a dutiful son ! one must have formed the most extensive expectations on his life, his fortune, and his happiness, and these not resting upon the common course of events, which in their own nature are so uncertain, but upon the unchangeable promises of God ; and, after all, one must suppose oneself preparing him for sacrifice, the instruments of death in our hands, and the destined spot in view, where he was to be offered a victim ; one must suppose the question put to oneself, “ *My father ! behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering ?*” ere we can feel

feel the energy of the question, ere we can judge of those keen sensations, which it awakened in the soul of Abraham. "My son," said the pious patriarch, "God shall provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." Short answer, extorted from an agonizing heart!—"So they went both of them together."

"And they came to the place of which God had told him: and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood: and Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."—Deliberate and trying process! What parent's heart but melts at the scene! Where is the father who would not shrink back at so severe a trial! where the parent's hand that would be sufficiently strong to cut asunder the endearing cords which twine about the heart, and which, when cut, must drain off all the comfort of human life!

We are now arrived at the crisis of the sacred story; we become deeply interested for the event: our compassion, our sympathy are arrested. We see the father with a knife in his hand; a son stretched upon the wood,
passive,

passive, silent, dutiful; a son whose filial affection had prepared him for every stroke that could be received from a parent's hand. Methinks we may see the tear starting from the eye of Abraham: methinks we hear, in broken accents, "Farewel, my son! my Isaac! my only son Isaac, whom I have long nurtured with all the indulgence of an affectionate father, who hast been the object of thy mother's tenderest care! I received thee unexpectedly from God; he calls for thee again! He gave, and he taketh away, blessed be his name! Behold, his hand is uplifted! the knife is descending, when the angel of the Lord interposes: he calls from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham;" and he answers, "Here am I;" on my dreadful post, performing thy commands! "And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine *only son*, from me. And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah Jireh.—the Lord will see and provide." Such is the transaction unto which our attention has been led by the text. The conflict was severe, and the patriarch's triumph complete.

St. Paul

St. Paul suggests to us the cause of this triumph : “ By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up his son Isaac ; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only son.

In the entrance upon this discourse, I observed, that the New Testament is a key to the Old. From the New we learn that Abraham was favoured with a distant view of the gospel dispensation : “ He saw the day of Christ, and was glad.” We are assured that the gospel was preached unto Abraham. He was instructed that Messias was to be born and suffer. The institution of sacrifices was to keep up faith and hope in him ; they were so many types of the one great sacrifice of Christ. Abraham might therefore consider the birth of Isaac as typical of the Redeemer’s, and he might naturally suppose, that God called upon him to offer him up as a type of his death. With these views he might indulge the persuasion, that if God permitted him to slay his son, he would raise him from the dead again, and hereby make him a type of the Saviour’s resurrection also. St. Paul confirms
this

this supposition by observing, that Abraham did receive his son from the dead in a figure.

It was not only then in the intention of the divine mind to bring into a conspicuous point of view the faith of his servant; not only to hold him up to his church in succeeding generations, as an example of the invincible power of faith; but fitly to represent, in the person of Isaac, that one great sacrifice which the Messias should make, when, in the end of the world, at the time before ordained in the secret counsel of God, he should appear to put away sin. This was the event, of which Abraham prophesied with all the confidence of faith, saying, "My son, God shall provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." This was the event, which the Psalmist described, when he said, in the person of the Messias, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices thou hadst no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God;"—thy law is within my heart.

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In the day of his manifestation to Israel, John Baptist pointed the inquiring multitude to the subject of these prophecies: "Behold," said he, "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." Did Isaac bear the wood to the mountain appointed of God? See Jesus also bearing his cross to Calvary, stretched upon its summit; the sword of God awakened against the shepherd of his people, and smiting the fellow of the Lord of hosts. Here every type was fulfilled, every shadow was substantiated. The Son of God made ~~himself~~ a sin-offering, and by this one oblation of himself, once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement and satisfaction for the sins of the world!

We have beheld Abraham in the severest conflict of human nature: we have felt with a man like ourselves, in his anxious struggles between the affections of a parent's heart, and that obedience, which he owed to the command of God. But what should be our sentiments when we see that God himself giving up his Son to the stroke of death! Abraham had many powerful motives to induce him to obedience: God was the giver

of all his blessings ; with his peculiar favour he had been distinguished ; his arm had frequently interposed for his deliverance in the moment of danger ; he was the subject of many great and precious promises : God was his friend ; and to him he was ready to make the greatest of all possible offerings !

But for whom does the Son of God suffer ? for whom does he become a victim ?—It was for his enemies !

“ Herein is love ; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

“ God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were sinners Christ died for us : yea, whilst we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”

“ He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God : and he willeth that all men should come to the knowledge of this truth, and be saved.” There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby they can be saved, but by the name of Jesus. He
is

is the procuring cause of salvation, and there is salvation in no other.

The process of this salvation is express, it is clear, it is unequivocal : “ He shall save his people from their sins,” said the angel.— “ They shall be sanctified through faith that is in me,” said Christ : and says St. John the Baptist, “ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” This subject then, whilst to the believer in Christ it gives the most ample ground of security, of confidence, and of peace, assumes an aspect of dreadful severity to those who know not God, neither obey the voice of his gospel. In the sacrifice and death of Christ, we view the dreadful malignity of sin, its offensiveness to God, the necessity of a satisfaction to the divine justice.—If men will not embrace this only hope set before them, if they will not make the atonement of this Saviour their refuge,—if they will not submit to his righteousness, as that alone which can justify them before God, they reject the council of God against their own souls ; they exclude themselves from the

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benefits

benefits of that Mediator which he hath appointed, and must perish without remedy.—

“ We then, as ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God!”

Jesus, having triumphed over death, is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high, to give repentance and remission of sins : He possesses all power, both in heaven and on earth. He waits to be gracious—the arms of his love are extended to receive every returning penitent. He encourages all to come unto him who, conscious of their guilt and danger, are seeking pardon and salvation. He encourages them to come, with this gracious declaration, “ He who cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.”

S E R M O N IV.

THE WANDERER RESTORED.

P S A L M xxiii. 3.

*He restoreth my soul : he leadeth me in the paths
of righteousness for his name's sake.*

THIS beautiful Psalm must ever afford the sublimest pleasure to a devout mind. The sincere believer, whilst passing through this world, will find by constant experience that he is not exempt from the common wants, and the common calamities of men. Placed in a dreary wilderness, where nothing grows that is suited to the nature of his immortal part, he feels himself destitute and forlorn. Subject to the infirmities of a depraved nature, exposed to the assaults of various

enemies, specious, crafty, and powerful, surrounded with dangers, the daily consequence of fierce temptation—unto what quarter shall he turn for aid ?

The Psalmist will instruct us ; he points to the rock from whence cometh salvation : “ The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” In what possible view can God our Creator be placed more endearing and animating ? He charges himself with the care of his flock ; he assumes the character of the good shepherd ; he assures us that his flock are his own. The Almighty has a property in the righteous, in all those who are at peace with him, through his Son, and he has engaged to take care of them. “ He is my shepherd,” says David, “ I shall not want.” The wants of the worldly man are perpetual ; he has ever some new object in view : he is saying to the whole Creation, Give, give ! His desires are insatiable : whatever he possesses, still he wants—he wants happiness ; for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. I might appeal to those who are yet strangers to that peace which religion inspires : they know, by sad experience, how void of true felicity

city all their enjoyments have been. They have obtained the summit of their wishes, and they have been astonished to find that summit strewn with disappointment. Still one thing is needful to give a relish to every earthly good, and that is the sweet appropriation of these words, "The Lord is my shepherd."—If he be our patron, our guide, and our protector, certain it is that we shall not want.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."—Sole proprietor of all things, he will not withhold any necessary good from those who fear him, from those who walk uprightly.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters."—Thus, supporting the character of the good shepherd, he provides for the comfort and support of his flock. His word, like the green and flourishing meadows, affords repose to the weary soul : his promises, like the living waters, refresh the longing heart, and inspire with fresh vigour for his work and service.—
"He restoreth my soul ; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Without any other introduction, the first observation I would make from the words of the text is, That the holy scriptures consider the whole human race as having wandered from God, and it is God only who can restore them. How they have wandered, and how they are restored, our blessed Saviour hath instructed us, in the parable of the prodigal son.—We there, in the character of the younger brother, see a just emblem of the sinner. Tired of the indulgence and blessings of his father's house, he takes his portion, quits the paternal roof, and goes into a far country. No longer instructed by the precepts, nor influenced by the example, of his best friend, he plunges into all the follies incident to the inexperience of youth, into all the extravagance of vice and dissipation.—Thus, when sin had debased the image of God in man, leaving the pure and sacred abodes of Paradise, he wandered in this wilderness of sin and misery; and, sharers in his fall, we have all wandered from the fold of God, from the holy habitation of our Father, and the plenties of his house. The prodigal's portion was consumed; and when he had spent all, he began to be in want.

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The pleasures of sin, the blandishments of voluptuousness, the maddening orgies of intemperance, may, for a time, spread a stupor over the soul, and render it insensible to its true state.

But the time will come, when either gentle methods, or the severer chastisements of God, by a sharp training in the school of adversity, shall convince the sinner of his folly, and he shall begin to be in want.

The first step which the Almighty takes to restore the prodigal sinner to his favour, is by bringing him to a sense of his real situation. Our Lord describes the prodigal "as coming to himself." St. Paul speaks of the same circumstance, as the "opening the eyes of the understanding, a bringing from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." He calls it a "translation from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son."—All which expressions serve to confirm the reality, the necessity, and the importance of conversion. In this view the Psalmist had reason to look up with thankfulness, to God, and say, "He restoreth my soul."

No power but his can do this: well would it be, therefore, for all those who are conscious that they are in a state of deep depravity, far distant from their heavenly Father's house, if they would look up to him, and, using the language of the prophet, say, "Turn thou us, O Lord, and so shall we be turned;" or with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." The prodigal had spent all his substance with riotous living, and then he began to be in want. But instead of returning directly to his father's house, he joined himself to a citizen of that country to feed his swine. It happens frequently, that those who have wandered farthest from God; who have indulged themselves in every vanity and folly; who, strangers to the calls of virtue, have sought only the gratification of their senses—these have been suddenly roused by an awakened conscience; they have been filled with an apprehension of being for ever undone; restless under these impressions, and anxious for some unknown blessing, which they knew not how to describe, they have become, from the chearful and gay, the serious and contemplative: the world has at once decided on their case—they are either low-spirited;

rited ; or, they do not mingle as usual with society ; or, they have been troubling their heads with religion.

The pleasures of the world are prescribed as the best antidote : they have been persuaded to make the experiment, to seek for satisfaction in those husks which have already introduced misery ; and it has been the greatest of all possible blessings to them, if they have found fresh disappointment in their return to these lying vanities ; if they have not, by plunging again into the world, choaked the good seed, and resisted the secret monitor of Heaven. If their convictions have been cherished, they have found that they wanted something which the world could not give. The prince of this world they have found an hard master ; his service slavery ; his provisions only such as the swine did eat ; his wages eternal death.

In this moment of distress, this moment of dispassionate reflection, they have come to themselves : they have considered their divine original ; that they are the offspring of God, that
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he breathed into them the breath of life, that they carry within them a deathless soul ; a restoration therefore to his favour, a re-admission to his love, to his house, to his kingdom, has become the supreme object of their attention and desire.

“ How many hired servants hath my father, who have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! I will arise, and go to my father, I will say unto him, Father ; ”—unworthy as I am, I will plead that I am his ; and, though I have forfeited the privileges of a son, I will solicit the advantages only of a domestic ; I will say, “ Make me as one of thine hired servants.”

We may hence observe, that humility is one of the first graces distinguishable in the true convert.

A consciousness of guilt and unworthiness obliterates every idea of self-importance and of merit ; the gospel of Christ teaches us that we have nothing to pay. Simon the Pharisee and Mary the sinner are reduced to one common level before God.—“ When they had
nothing

nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

If pardon is to be obtained, it must be freely, of grace alone. "Eternal life," says St. Paul, "is the gift of God, but the wages of sin is death." Sin may give us a title to punishment, but mercy flows, it can only flow to us through the infinite merits of the Son of God. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.—I have introduced the parable of the prodigal son, to shew you, in the first instance, how the true penitent is restored to the favour of God; and the close of this parable points out to us the encouragement we all have to return to him. Sick of folly, weary of his sins, feeling a famine in his soul, he thought of his father's house, he determined to arise, and go to his father.

"He arose, and went; and while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, he saw him, and ran, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him."—Here the divine Majesty appears in the true spirit of his own declaration: "As I live," saith the Lord, "I desire not the death
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of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live."

He represents himself as striving with men by his spirit, as calling to them; as giving them line upon line, and precept upon precept; and here, as taking infinite pleasure in seeing the favourable operation of his own grace in the return of his poor, offending, wandering children. He is described as running towards them, falling upon their necks, and kissing them. He sees the first emotion of the heart towards himself; he strengthens the bruised reed; he enkindles the smoking flax; he meets them whilst a great way off with his mercy; he whispers to them with his small, still voice, Seek ye the Lord; whilst their hearts responsive cry out, Thy face, Lord, will we seek. Thus may the true penitent sinner say, "He restoreth my soul."

Nor is this all.—The Psalmist could say, nay, he was compelled to say with deep humility, as a back-slider, "He restoreth my soul."

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He had been particularly distinguished as the favourite of Heaven ; he was raised from obscurity to be the prince of God's people, and yet he fell into the most atrocious vices, and daringly offended against God. And such is the stupifying nature of sin, that, notwithstanding all his knowledge and experience of the rectitude of God's government, the purity of his nature, and his eternal aversion to immorality, he continued a year, senseless, hardened, and impenitent ; and such he would have remained, had not the very person against whom he sinned pitied him, and in mercy to his soul sent his prophet to him, to bring his sins to remembrance, to paint his abominable transgressions in all their heinous colours, to fill his breast with the most ingenuous shame and compunction ; and to inspire him with that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto life. His eyes were opened, and he at once saw the extent of his crime, the use the enemies of God would make of it, what cause it would give them to blaspheme, what dishonour he had done to the people, the name, the church of God—but above all, his ingratitude against his heavenly Father, against the shepherd and guide of his youth. This made the
deepest

deepest impresson on his mind; he compared the goodness and mercy which had followed him all his days with the base returns he had made: this view absorbed every other consideration, and made him exclaim, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned; and done this evil in thy sight!" It cannot be a wonder, then, that when God had pardoned him his excessive guilt, when he had restored him to the joys of his salvation, that he should cry out with astonishment and ecstasy, "He restoreth my soul."—If in the midst of this congregation there should be any character delineated in that of David, who having, as St. Paul expresses himself, "once tasted of the heavenly gift, and shared of the powers of the world to come;" who once sorrowed with unfeigned penitence, and lifted up the tearful eye with humble hope of obtaining mercy; who for a time escaped the pollution that is in the world, and appeared to be giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure, yet who after all have lost every serious impresson, forgotten the vows of God which were upon you; have forgotten that Redeemer who once appeared so high in your estimation, so unspeakably dear to you; have turned your backs upon him, and smitten him in the house
of

of his friends ; have returned again to the world, beguiled by its pleasures, seduced by its interests, led captive by its god—we exhort you to advance no farther in the paths of the destroyer.

Did sin once appear exceedingly sinful unto you ?—You were not mistaken ; it is exceedingly sinful : it is abominable to God, it is destructive to man.—Did eternity once appear to you with all its vast importance ?—did the divine justice seem armed to take vengeance on the guilty ? did it appear suspended over you ? did you tremble lest you should feel the whole weight of the divine displeasure ?—Eternity is still important, infinitely important ! Still the glittering sword is unsheathed, still the right hand of God seemeth ready to take hold on vengeance, to launch forth the instruments of death—that is, if the sinner turn not. But hear the joyful news which we this day bring unto you,—“ Return, ye back-sliding children,” saith the Lord, “ and I will have mercy upon you ; I will heal all your back-slidings, your sins and iniquities I will remember no more.” Do not despair.—Behold the offending, back-sliding Peter : behold the

compassionate, forgiving look of Jesus Christ! If, like Peter, you have offended—if, like David, you have sinned—imitate their sorrows: repent like them, and with them you shall say, “He restoreth my soul.”

Let it be observed further, that the Psalmist not only said, “He restoreth my soul,” but, “He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” Here then we have an infallible rule, whereby we may all form a right judgment of ourselves. If God hath restored our souls, he also leads us in the paths of righteousness. There is in this plain truth, nothing speculative, nothing ambiguous; conviction may easily find its way to your breasts: it is a point of no difficulty for each of you to decide whether you are led in the paths of righteousness; whether they are your delight, the very joy of your heart. St. Paul hath instructed us that “The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth us that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.” If you have not yet seen this to be the natural tendency of the gospel to make men better, more holy, just, conscientious,
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you have not been well instructed ; you had need to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God.

If, in preference to the things above, you are seeking those things which are on the earth, careless whether he restoreth your souls or not, refusing to acknowledge him in all your ways, regardless of the wonderful scheme of redemption by Christ Jesus, indifferent as to the dread scenes of futurity, without any effectual desires to be made like God, and to be brought into the paths of righteousness—you are doubtless still in that far country described already in the parable, far from your heavenly Father, far from the peace of his house, and the plenty of his table.

Ask yourselves, what will be the consequence of dying in this strange land, with your soul unrestored, with your feet estranged to the paths of righteousness ? Have you not heard, upon divine authority, that “ without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Your souls must be restored here ; you must be led in the paths of righteousness on earth, or give up every hope of heaven and happiness hereafter.

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Judgment

Judgment will find you with the same characters, with the same image and superscription, with which you leave this world. Nor have we any thing to promise you from that too common dependance, a death-bed repentance. Experience has long taught us, that the repentance on a sick bed is often more specious than real, more flattering than safe. We would not discourage men in their last anxious moments, but we would warn the living against trusting to their last hours. If you would wish to obtain an assurance of a peaceful death, if you would wish to see God with acceptance, then seek him now while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon." If you will not be obedient to his invitation, you have small reason to hope that he will hear you in your distress; nay, he hath declared the very contrary:—"Because I called, and ye refused, I stretched forth my hand, and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."

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Having thus applied myself to your consciences, I have only to pray that you will give the word of God its due weight. Sin may flatter, but it will surely destroy. If you reject the saving counsels of the Almighty, you hazard every thing—your souls, your happiness, your all.

And is it a reasonable thing that you should sacrifice every hope of a blessed eternity, for the poor, transient, unsatisfying gratifications of an hour? Can you suppose that the paths of righteousness have no charms? are there no pleasures to be found in them; no joys in being in a state of peace and reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ?—Yes, there are: if you would be prevailed on to make the trial, you would not only say with David, “He restoreth my soul,” but that “wisdom’s ways are pleasantness, and the paths of righteousness are peace.”—Lastly,

“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”—Every thing that relates to our restoration to the divine favour must have a tendency to bring glory to the name of God: the scheme of human redemption will

for ever glorify his wisdom ; the method by which he has effected it will glorify his love ; and the effects wrought upon the moral characters of men, in order to fit them for the inheritance of the saints in light, will for ever glorify his holiness. You have to-day, in the death of Christ, an opportunity of contemplating that Mediator, through whom mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other : you behold what it cost the Son of God to restore our Souls. Here you may consider the love of God as manifesting itself most wonderfully in the cross of Christ. His agonies ought to inspire us with an hatred of sin ; the price of our redemption ought to endear the amiable sufferer. You have to remember, that, with his last expiring breath, with his fainting tremulous voice, he prayed for his enemies. Whilst then with gratitude you review this astonishing interposition of divine goodness, may you each, with a lively faith, with an holy triumph, with consciences sprinkled with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, say, “ Thus it is he restoreth my soul, and strengthens me to walk in the paths of righteousness.”

S E R M O N

S E R M O N V.

THE SLEEP AND DEATH OF SIN.

EPHESIANS, V. 14.

*Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest,
and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give
thee light.*

THE scriptures both of the Old and New Testament abound with figures. Sensible objects are frequently chosen to represent spiritual: familiar and well-known circumstances among men are often fixed on to shew some corresponding spiritual concern.

Our text affords us two strong and well-known images, to teach us the truths of religion, to point out to us the real state of

every man as born into this world ; a state here strikingly represented by sleep and death.

Sleep is a state of general inactivity, a state of presumed security, a state which oft employs the mind in visionary scenes.

Sin has done that to the soul, which weariness does to the body ; it has cast it into a deep sleep.

God Almighty has made himself known to man as the author of his being. The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. There is neither language nor nation where the voice of his power and his providence is not heard ; and yet, like the confused sounds which address the hearing organs of a sleeping man, no effect is produced. He has given unto men his laws to regulate their conduct ; laws which clearly point out their duty to himself, and to all mankind : but their ears are closed to instruction ; they despise his ordinances, and cast his laws behind their backs. He has sent his Son into the world to redeem them : Jesus Christ has made a full discovery of the will of his heavenly Father ;

Father ; he has given the most awful sanctions to the gospel he preached, by establishing the certainty of a future state of eternal rewards and punishments ; and yet they remain as regardless of these things, as a man who is told the most important news whilst he sleeps.

They are totally inactive as to the duties of the Christian life. They are not so with respect to their worldly interests or pleasures ; here they are vigilant, laborious : if the prospects of gain be before them, they are pursued with avidity ; if an accession of power, they grasp at it with ardour ; if the gratification of their sensual appetites, with eagerness and punctuality : but the immortal part of them is left neglected ; sleeping on in sin, they make no effort to secure their everlasting happiness, they seek no remedy for their guilt.

They are fallen from God, they have lost his favour, they have forfeited all pretensions to his approbation ; and yet they are insensible to their loss, they are without anxiety to be restored. Where shall we direct our researches for the cause ? The scripture describes the carnal mind as unable to discern the things of

the spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned : it describes Satan as blinding the minds of the children of disobedience, lest the light of the gospel should shine into their hearts.

A state of sleep is also a state of visionary scenes. And is not this the case with every man who lives not under the influence of religion ? The life which he is spending with so much anxiety, is it not as the unsubstantial vapour ? The objects of his pursuit, are they not fleeting, transient, unsatisfying ; the riches he possesses heaped up, it is likely, for others ; the honours he seeks, fading, and destitute of intrinsic worth ?

It is a state of imaginary security. Whatever dangers surround the sleeping man, his cares are at rest. Though the assassin holds the deadly weapon at his throat, or the consuming fire burns beneath him, he is perfectly unanxious. Thus it is with the man who lives in sin, who is the servant of divers lusts and pleasures : he is the unresisting prey of that enemy of God and man, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour ; he is in the utmost danger of everlasting

lasting woe, and yet he knows it not ; sin has induced a sleep upon the soul, it has closed the eyes, and stopped the ears, and hardened the heart, and has left the whole man in this state of distance from God, the living God.

There is another image in my text still more striking than sleep: it is death. Sinners are described to be in a state of death ; they are absolutely without spiritual life. The signs of natural life are obvious ; these are breath and motion : and the infallible signs of the life of the inward man are breath and motion. A man who is alive to God, breathes after him, in prayer : it is as natural for him to call upon God, as it is for the lungs to move in the act of respiration ; it is the first token of the revival of the soul :—" Go," said the Lord to Ananias, " go unto Saul, for behold he prayeth."

The man who is dead in sin never prays ;— he may utter ten thousand forms with his lips, but he is a stranger to spiritual life :—" He is dead," says the apostle, " while he lives." The signs of death are upon him, he is without motion, he performs none of the functions proper
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to spiritual life. The scriptures describe the state of the new man thus:—"He walks in the way of God's commandments; he runs the race that is set before him; he wrestles not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places; he fights manfully under Christ's banner; he fights the good fight of faith, that he may lay hold on eternal life." Now in each of these respects there is required exertion, but in each the sinner is dead; he stirs not a step, moves not an arm; he enters not the lists, knows no warfare, seeks no victory.—"In Adam," says St. Paul, "all died." The sentence pronounced upon him is pronounced upon all: "Death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

The sinner, therefore, in a state of nature, is in a state of death; and, what is still more serious, if he be not recovered from this state, he is exposed to death eternal. "God," says the Psalmist, "shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his wickedness."—"The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the

nations that forget God.”—“Then,” says Christ, “shall the judge say to them on his left hand, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”—“This is the second death !”

Such being the natural state of sinful men, you will easily perceive the propriety of the exhortation contained in my text—“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

The designs of God in the dispensations of his word, by his prophets, by his Son, by his apostles, and ministers in every age, are all directed to this one end;—to awaken men out of sleep—to raise them from the death of sin, unto a life of righteousness—to warn them to fly from the wrath to come—to invite them to aspire after glory and immortality.

The present subject then, in this view, becomes interesting to ourselves—to every soul of man who shall become acquainted with the divine dispensations, to the end of the world.

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If we live under the dominion of sin, the evidence is full, that we are in a state of sleep, nay, in a state of death. There are numbers, my brethren, who, with the guilt of all the sins they ever committed upon them, yet are easy, undisturbed, unanxious about the dread decision of eternity, unto which they are hastening; where they must stand before the pure and holy presence of God, to answer for all their thoughts, and words, and works. Is this the case with any of you? are you thus unconcerned? can there be a stronger evidence of your being in a state of spiritual sleep? Are you standing on the brink of endless misery, subject in a moment to sink into irrecoverable ruin, and awake? It cannot be! We must address you each in the powerful language of the text, "Awake thou that sleepest!"—O spirit of the Lord, do thou speak to the heart and to the conscience, that they may awake and consider!

To be awakened, in the scripture sense of the word, is to be convinced of sin, its offensiveness to God, its ruinous tendency; it is to be alarmed under the guilt, to fly from the

power, that the punishment of sin may be escaped.

You know, that however securely and easily a person may sleep, yet if he be awakened, and beholds himself in imminent danger, he will need no other motive to induce him to escape. The sacred volume declares all men to be sinners, and exposed by sin to the most dreadful and complicated evils; if you continue unaffected with this representation, you are still sleeping in sin: but, “Awake thou that sleepest;” the voice of God calls you; you are forewarned that this sleep terminates in death, a state of privation of every principle of spiritual life.

I have already observed, that the first sign of life in the reviving soul, is his breathing that breath which is proper to spiritual life; this may serve as the ground of self-examination: the man who discovers that sin has separated between him and his Maker, that his transgressions have exposed him to all the severity of his displeasure, will breathe out, from the sincerest contrition of heart, “God be merciful to me a sinner;”—“Lord save me, or I perish.”

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This is a favourable sign ; but we go further. The person who is awakened in the sense of my text, who has arisen from the dead in the sense of my text, gives full evidence of it by motion ; he moves and acts ; he not only ceases to do evil, but he learns to do well :— “ Once were ye darkness,” says the apostle in this same chapter, “ but now are ye light in the Lord ;” and immediately he adds, “ Walk as children of light—see that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” So that whilst in this subject we comprehend repentance from dead works, there also follows a serving the Lord in newness of life ; an entire breaking away from sinful habits and sinful companions ; a steady perseverance in all godliness and honesty ; the constant and conscientious exercise of every religious duty ; a diligent and daily reading his testimonies, and maintaining and cultivating an intercourse with heaven by prayer, and supplication, and thanksgiving.

Have you these evidences in your favour ? have you broken off your sin by repentance ; and are you thus walking, with an upright and sincere intention, in all the commandments and ordinances

ordinances of the Lord? If so, you may rejoice. He that caused light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into your hearts; he that hath begun this good work will bring it to perfection: you may be compassed with infirmities, you may be exercised with fears, but Jesus Christ ever lives to make intercession for you, and will not leave you until he hath fulfilled all things which he hath promised to those who confide in him.

The subject on which I have been treating is one of the first importance: would to God that it might be viewed as such by every one in this congregation.

My text is an address from God, by his apostle, to every sleeping sinner. He bids them awake; he commands the dead to arise, and with this peculiar circumstance of encouragement, "Christ shall give thee light." He is the light which alone can direct the steps of every returning penitent: he lighteth every man that cometh into the spiritual world.—"God," says the apostle, "who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into your hearts,
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the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Does then a state of sin appear to you to be what my text declares it to be, a state of sleep and death? you see also your resource, "Christ shall give thee light;"—he shall shew you that there is help laid upon one that is mighty, that he is able to rouse the sleeping, and to raise the dead!

The treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in him; he knows your wants, and has a disposition to supply them.

Though your sins have been great, numerous, and aggravated, yet in him there is plentiful redemption; "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." God hath received, at the hand of your surety, double for all your transgressions.

In this view, every believer may take up the language of the pious Psalmist, and say, "The
Lord

Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid ?”

This promise in my text, “Christ shall give thee light,” is opposed to all the evils which arise from the spiritual sleep and spiritual death of sinners : instead of a state of ignorance, the gospel introduces knowledge. The light of Christ comprizes a knowledge of God, and of his word, and of his will ; a knowledge which makes a man acquainted with himself in all his sinfulness and depravity, and with that mystery, as St. Paul speaks, which was hid from ages and generations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. The view which the faith of the Christian has of his Saviour, in his person, work, and offices, represents him so suitable to all that his necessities require, that it becomes an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast : he willingly and entirely relies upon what he has done and suffered for him, believing that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He sees that a state of sin is a state of condemnation, and he is taught, that the unbeliever is condemned already ; but he becomes assured, under the

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function of the same authority, that he who is delivered from sin, and lives by faith on the Son of God, is passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation.

This promise, "Christ shall give thee light," implies further, sufficient direction and support in the midst of every trial, difficulty, or temptation, which may arise from the common calamities of men, or from a firm and unshaken adherence to the gospel of the Son of God. Thus the prophet Micah represents the man of piety, the true believer, as soaring, above all opposition, upon the pinions of faith. "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

The prophet Isaiah goes further—"The Lord," says he, "shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

This is to be the crowning blessing: and surely it is no inconsiderable object then for which the Christian firmly opposes the world, the flesh, and the devil; it is no inconsiderable

able object unto which your attention is directed by my text—"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Take into your imagination every thing that can be united to form the perfection of human happiness—the light of Christ is more: he offers you heaven, where "there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be upon their foreheads: and there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither the light of the sun; for the Lord giveth them light, and they shall reign with him for ever and ever."—Are any of you hazarding this blessedness—and for what? For the vanities of an hour? for the gratifications of a moment? for the pleasures of sin? Alas! you must repent of your conduct. God grant it may be in time; may you awake now at his bidding, may you arise from the dead now at his call. Lay aside your sins; bring forth fruits meet for repentance; flee for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before you, and Christ shall give you light.

It is his gift :—"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

His gospel is free as the light ; its blessings are offered to you, as the purchase of his blood : if you reject them, you are inexcusable ; your ruin will be of your own choice :—"If you live after the flesh you shall die ; but if, through the Spirit, you do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live."

Christians ! I conclude with reminding you of your duty. Once were you darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of light : you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sin ; let the life you hereafter live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved you, and given himself for you.—Has he given you light ? remember then his command, hold it sacred :—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Look to him day by day for an increase of light ; study his word, embrace his promises, copy after

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his example, and look forward with faith, with patience, and with hope, through the clouds and darkness which interpose between you and the new Jerusalem—between you and your Saviour: these clouds and that darkness are soon to be removed; they will soon give place to the bright shining of that everlasting day, in which you shall see Jesus as he is, be near him and like him for evermore.

S E R M O N VI.

HUMILITY THE FOUNDATION OF
RELIGION.

LUKE, vii. Part of Verse 42.

*And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly
forgave them both.*

THE occasion of these words was this :
Our blessed Lord had been invited to
the house of one of the Pharisees. The motives
which led to this invitation are difficult to de-
termine ; but Jesus Christ, with his usual
condescension, accepted it—he went and sat
down to meat with him.

While he was at dinner, a woman, whom the
Pharisee knew to have been a notorious sinner,

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came

came in : she had, without doubt, previously been one of Christ's hearers, and had profited by his ministry ; she had been truly converted from the evil of her ways, and was seeking an assurance of the favour of Jesus Christ with full purpose of heart ; she came here to acknowledge her obligations to this friend of mankind, and she did it with every possible expression of self-abasement, of contrition, and of love.

She stood behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head. She then kissed them, in token of the most profound respect, and anointed them with precious ointment from an alabaster box.

The Pharisee, who, with a mixture of pride and indignation, had beheld these little attentions paid by a sinner to his guest, immediately began to entertain suspicions of his character : " This man," said he within himself, " were he a prophet, would certainly have known what kind of person this woman is ; he would have been apprized that she is infamous in the estimation of all around her, and totally unworthy of that smile of benevolence and approval which dwells
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in his aspect.”—Such is the natural disposition of pride and self-sufficiency. The language of the contracted soul, who would monopolize the divine favour, is, “Stand by, I am holier than thou.”

Our blessed Saviour observed closely what what was passing in this Pharisee's breast: he spake within himself, but his thoughts were not hidden from the all-penetrating eye of Omniscience. He caught the Pharisee in the midst of his reasoning, and said, “Simon, I have something to say to thee. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor who had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty; and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both: tell me therefore which of them will love him most. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he unto whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast judged rightly. And he turned unto the woman, and said, Thou see'st this woman: I entered thine house, and thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head; thou gavest me no kifs, but

but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet ; mine head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment : wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven her ; therefore she loveth much, but to whomsoever little is forgiven, the same loveth little."—Such was the substance of the very interesting conversation which passed between Simon the Pharisee and Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world : and as we have in this parable of the debtor and creditor an opportunity of contemplating our Redeemer in the most amiable point of view, so ought we to consider it as capable of the most general application.

Herein we may view ourselves ; our whole race being debtors to the infinite Majesty of heaven, who from the first moment of our existence had the highest claims upon us for a general and constant obedience to his laws. Whether we have not all sinned, and fallen short of our duty and his glory, is a proper subject for our present enquiry. — We are commanded to love God with all our hearts ;

to love him above all things ; to love him not only for those supreme perfections which he possesses in himself, but because all his perfections conspire to render his creatures happy. He has a claim upon our affections, as the God who has created us ; who, when we were not, brought us into existence, and made us subjects capable of unutterable pleasure. His providence also demands our love : he preserves us whom he has made ; he presides over our paths ; he gives us all things richly to enjoy ; he follows us with a profusion of blessings, and crowns every day with loving kindness and tender mercy. But his grace rises highest in its claims upon our gratitude : we were created, we were preserved, but we were fallen ; we had lost the image of God, we were all in absolute rebellion against him ; though we were the subjects of his power and of his patience, yet we provoked him every day. “The ox knoweth his owner (said the Lord) and the ass his master’s crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.”

When we were thus depraved in our minds, become mortal in our bodies, and alienated from the life of God, led captive by Satan
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at his will, the voluntary bondslaves of unrighteousness; then Almighty grace interposed for our recovery; Christ the Lord descended from above to this earth; he “assumed the form of a servant, and redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:—he suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.” And has he not then a claim upon our love? ought we not to love him above all things? But, alas! where are the expressions of our gratitude? Are they to be discovered by our lives? Do not the pleasures of the world rob him of our hearts? Are we not more intent upon its fashions, upon the accumulation of riches, upon the acquisition of honours? do we not covet these rather than the favour of the infinite God? Even in those exercises which we esteem expressions of our duty and affection to him, is not our religion degenerated into the most unmeaning and lifeless formality, our pretended approaches to our heavenly Father but the mere service of the lip, while our hearts are the most distant from that pure and spiritual worship which is the only offering acceptable in his sight? We are quick to discern the effects of real love and affection

fection among mankind ; we know what invariable attention it produces to the honour and interests of the object of our regard : let us examine our own hearts, and it is not impossible but that we shall make a discovery, unto which we have been hitherto strangers, namely, that we neither love nor serve God with that intenseness of affection and respect which we have often paid to our fellow-creatures.

From the subject before us, this truth is firmly established, that a sense of guilt gives fervour and energy to devotion ; and that an experience of the pardoning mercy of Christ inspires the soul with love. — We are here presented with two characters, as opposite as light and darkness ; Simon, a pompous self-righteous Pharisee, and an humble penitent sinner. The one was of that sort of religionists, whose whole system consisted in forms and ceremonies, totally destitute of power, of life, and of love ; who sought the praise of men ; to be in the good opinion of the world, whilst he was entirely indifferent to that praise which cometh from above, and unsolicitous to obtain the appro-
bation

bation of that Being who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. He conceived that he had offended but little, and therefore he had little to lament; that his crimes against God had been but few, and therefore he had but few to acknowledge : he had not much to be forgiven, he therefore loved but little.

The other had been thoroughly convinced of sin ; she had felt the burden of her guilt, and knew that, both by nature and by practice, she was a poor, depraved, fallen, guilty creature : she had no plea to make upon the foot of her own merit, no righteousness to offer as sufficient to recommend her to God. She approached Christ as the friend of sinners, who professed himself ready to receive all who came unto him, and who declared, that “ he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” She did not approach him in vain ; her streaming eyes, and her broken heart, were in the sight of God her Saviour of great price : “ Her sins,” said he, “ which are many, are forgiven her ; therefore she loveth much, but unto whomsoever little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” Simon, the arrogant and

and self-conceited, remained a stranger to the power of Christ's grace, afar off from God, whilst this woman was admitted to a state of favour and reconciliation.—It is very remarkable, that there is not a single instance to be produced, in the whole sacred volume of scripture, of any one being under the influence of real religion, where that influence did not produce a spirit of humility and true contrition: it is of the very essence of the gospel to render us little in our own eyes, to give us humble thoughts of ourselves, and high, nay the most exalted, views of that grace by which we are saved. Without these dispositions, all pretensions to religion are absolutely vain. Nothing can be more contrary to the genius of the gospel than an high opinion of our own merits or deservings. What have we, the apostle asks, which we have not received? Are we not debtors to the bounty, to the sovereign mercy, and grace of God, for all we at present possess, and for what futurity promises? Where then is the room for self-applause? Has not our blessed Lord, upon this very principle of obligation to God for all we are, and all we hope to be, taught his disciples this lesson, that when
they

they have done all things whatsoever is commanded them, that they should say, “ we are unprofitable servants.”

There was no aphorism so familiar to the lips of Christ Jesus as this : “ He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” The first blessing he pronounced, in his memorable beatitudes, was to the poor in spirit. Now the poor in spirit implies the very spirit of humility and self-renunciation, which was so evident in the woman who stood behind our Saviour weeping, and who wiped his feet with her hair ; or poverty of spirit, in other words, is described to be productive of that godly sorrow for sin which worketh repentance unto life.

There may be indeed, and there doubtless are, very various degrees in the moral turpitude of different characters. Some, by a pious, sober, and regular conversation, have comparatively run in debt to the law of God but fifty pence ; whilst others have accumulated a debt of five hundred : but whenever the gracious Spirit from above affects the

the heart of either of these debtors, the common language of each will be, "God be merciful to me a sinner." They will subscribe to the testimony of Jesus Christ, that the heart is the source of all uncleanness; and that if that fountain of corruption has not spread abroad its polluted streams in an equal degree, they will be convinced, that the difference has arisen rather from the salutary habits of early restraint, than from any material distinction in the native dispositions of the heart.

Both will readily acquiesce in the same truth, that "all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God:" and it is when they thus become sensible that they have nothing to pay, that the Lord will frankly forgive them both. There is distinguished beauty in the turn of this expression, "when they had nothing to pay;" it comprizes in few words the whole gospel system, which is founded upon the free mercy of God, and the insolvency of man.

If man, by any obedience of his own, could have made restitution to the violated law of
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God, that obedience would have superseded the necessity of free forgiveness. The apostle has argued this point, and decided, that "if salvation be of works, then grace is no more grace." When man had nothing to pay, when he lay in a ruined state, helpless and hopeless, then it was that the mercy of God interposed, and provided a way in which he might freely forgive him. "While we were yet sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." It is worth your attention, that although the divine mercy descends to us in the most free and undeserved manner, yet that mercy was obtained for us at an infinite expence. The apostle, in representing the means by which mankind are saved, takes up the idea of the ransoming of slaves from the most abject state of servitude and slavery: "You hath he redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the price of his own precious blood, as of a lamb without spot." So that though we are freely forgiven, yet Christ hath paid our ransom. "Ye are," says St. Paul, "ye are bought with a price;" a price through which "mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Herein is love, and

yet how little is it considered! How comparatively few are there who can be prevailed on to believe that they were by nature in such a situation, that it became necessary for the Son of God to descend from heaven to save them at the expence of his own life! Why is it that we are so averse to acknowledge our guilt and misery, when a remedy so salutary and so powerful is at hand? Is it not an evidence of that depravity, which we affect to deny, that when God proposes a scheme of salvation, every way corresponding with his own wisdom and goodness, and equal to our necessities, that we should reject it, and choose to follow the suggestions of our own deceived imaginations, in opposition to the gospel of Christ? He represents himself as ready to forgive us freely upon our conviction that we have nothing to pay; but we do not approve the terms. To be entirely indebted to grace, to be brought to view ourselves as the poor insolvent subjects of free and unmerited mercy, this is too humiliating a system for the world. And yet such is the Christian system; it is upon such terms alone that the pardon of God can be at present obtained, and

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a share

a share in his future kingdom and glory secured.

The false conclusions, which the perverse minds of some are apt to draw from the freedom of God's grace and mercy, render it necessary for me to add, that whenever any are brought to a proper sense of their own unworthiness, and to know something of that love for Jesus Christ, which this woman experienced who wept upon his feet, and wiped them with her hair;—this knowledge of themselves, and of their Saviour, will have a most powerful tendency to make them better persons; true penitence will introduce an hatred of all evil, and a total departure from it.

When the woman taken in adultery obtained from the lips of the compassionate Redeemer a sentence of mercy, his language to her was, “Go thy way, and sin no more.”

The religion of Jesus Christ is totally opposite to the indulgence of any sin. The apostle exhorts with the greatest fervour, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart

depart from iniquity." Neither the attainment of pardon from God, nor even the expectation of that pardon, can at all exist with the indulgence of sin; for as nothing is so contrary to the nature, so nothing is more odiously offensive to the infinite purity of God.

"If ye love me," said Jesus Christ, "keep my commandments." Whence we learn, that a penitent must, to his sorrow for his misdoing, add faith, and to his faith, reformation. It is the union of these that will render the true believer fruitful in every good word and work.

The examination of our own hearts will subject us, it may be, to some keen reproaches; but having heard the tidings of free pardon, let us gladly embrace it, and acknowledging, that not five hundred pence, nor even five thousand talents, are sufficient to express the greatness of our debt, let us with humble confidence approach this compassionate friend of sinners.

Though perfectly pure and spotless himself, yet we have seen him deign to encourage

the chief of sinners to apply to him. Studious to avoid every appearance of self-importance in our searches after God, studious to cultivate the humble dispositions of this penitent suppliant, may we find a like access to the pardoning mercy of Jesus Christ now, and a future share in that salvation, of which he is the author to all that obey him.

S E R M O N VII.

CHRIST DESIRES THE SALVATION
OF MAN.

REV. iii. 20.

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any
man open unto me, I will come in to him, and
sup with him, and he with me.*

HOWEVER mysterious some parts of this sacred book may appear, the passage before us is not difficult to explain.—It presents us indeed with a *scene*, the circumstances of which are infinitely wonderful, but they are not ambiguous. They are calculated to strike the mind with astonishment, but they are at the same time addressed to the understanding, and the heart.

The person who condescends to address us in the words of the text, is no other than the

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Son

Son of God ; and the humiliating situation which he has here chosen, that of standing without the door to address us, should, at least, engage our attention to hear the proposals of grace, of mercy, and of salvation, which he delivers. “ Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man open unto me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.”

The door here figuratively describes the human heart : at this Jesus knocks for admission—happy are they who open unto him. Various are the methods which this divine person uses to gain that access which he here solicits. By his word, by his spirit, and by his providences, he waits to be gracious ; he draws near to us in mercy, he comes to the door of the heart, but he finds it shut against him : by nature it is shut.

The first evidence of the heart of man being closed against God was to be discovered almost as soon as it was formed. We observe it in Adam when he sought to hide himself amongst the trees in the garden of Eden : ever since that fatal hour the hearts of his
depraved

depraved offspring, by ignorance, by unbelief, by false prejudices, have been closed against God ; and their best, their immortal interests, by a three-fold bar, described by the apostle as earthly, sensual, devilish.

The heart is shut by ignorance. This fact is thus expressed in scripture: " Having the understanding darkened ; being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." The god of this world is also said to have " blinded the minds of the children of disobedience, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine into their hearts." But though this be the fact, men are too generally ignorant of their situation. The powers of spiritual perception being veiled through the deceitfulness of sin, the mind is strengthened against conviction, and the heart absolutely closed to every thing divine and heavenly. " O that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end !"

The heart is also closed by unbelief. God hath given us a revelation, in which is contained

tained every necessary article of information that relates to our present interests, or our future happiness : he has shewn us the rock from whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit from which we were digged : he hath described the perfect and happy state of our first father ; shewn us how he fell from his allegiance into sin and misery, and involved his whole posterity in his ruin : he hath declared his own infinite wisdom in devising a plan for our recovery ; manifested his grace in the execution of that plan, through the medium of the sacrifice, and death of his incarnate Son ; committed to him the ministry of reconciliation, and proclaimed his readiness to be at peace with all who will take hold of his covenant, and be at peace with him by sacrifice. But, alas ! the heart is shut by unbelief : the Almighty hath thought fit to represent the infidelity of man by the striking emblem of the deaf adder, “ which hears not the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.”

Another hindrance to the admission of Jesus Christ is, that he finds the heart pre-occupied with false prejudices. We are too ready to
imagine

imagine ourselves independent beings: strangers to reflection, we forget that God, who is the author of our lives, has a just claim on our submission, our obedience, and our services.

The doctrine, that we are not our own, that we are bought with a price, and that we are therefore under the strictest obligation to "glorify God with our bodies, and our spirits which are his;" this seems an hard saying: the language of infidelity is, "Who is the Lord that we should obey him? We know not the Lord, neither will we serve him." The proud reasoning of nature exalts itself against his written word; and although it contains the plainest matter of fact, truths that carry their own evidence with them, indisputable upon any principles of right reason, yet the veracity of God himself is questioned, and his word esteemed but a light thing. The case is this; the holy scriptures convey to our ears truths that are too humiliating to be received by the human heart: it recoils at that description of itself, which the pen of inspiration gives, and spurns at an authority which assumes a right to degrade a creature
so

so prone to self-approbation. This was plainly the case with the church of Laodicea, unto which the text was primarily addressed: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." But we bless the goodness of our condescending Saviour, that though the heart be thus closed by ignorance, by unbelief, by false prejudices, yet he stands at the door, and knocks: "Behold," saith he, "I," the Saviour of the world, who came from the bosom of my Father to seek and save that which was lost, "I stand at the door and knock."

I have already said, that this divine and gracious person attempts to gain admission to the human heart in a three-fold way; by his word, by his spirit, and by his providences.—By his word I would be understood to mean the whole sacred volume of scripture. In the Old Testament, as well as in the New, Jesus Christ endeavours to gain our attention, and to recover us to himself, by promises and by threatenings:—he stands at the door and knocks; he represents, in a thousand different forms, the
dreadful

dreadful malignity of sin ; in a thousand different examples he points us to the inevitable punishment which awaits the guilty ; he proclaims the whole human race to be transgressors from the womb, and exposed to the wrath of Heaven ; he presents us with a transcript of the holiness, the purity, and the justice of God in the promulgation of his law, and in the penalties annexed to each transgression ; he declares the incapability of any of the sons of Adam to obtain justification by the works of the law : having all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, he proclaims that it is by a new covenant head alone that we can be restored to the divine favour, and be placed in a state of reconciliation. The terms of this covenant he hath revealed in the fullest and most explicit manner : he represents himself as being the mediator between an offended God and offending man ; a mediator who, being in the form of God, and enjoying equal glory with him before all worlds, came down to the earth, and assumed our nature, fulfilled the terms of the covenant of redemption, by obeying the law which we had broken, hereby bringing in an everlasting righteousness ; and finally, by
offering

offering up himself as a sacrifice, by submitting himself to the death, even to the cursed death of the cross, he hath made a full and sufficient atonement, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the world ; and now, by his triumphant resurrection and prevailing intercession, he proclaims peace, pardon, and salvation to all believers.

These are the truths his word teaches ; our ears are frequently and importunately addressed with these doctrines : he stands at the door and knocks, but too often without success. In order to add to the hearing ear the understanding and the believing heart, there must be the influence of his pure, powerful, and holy spirit : for this we are taught to pray, and this we are taught to expect in consequence of his own kind and gracious promise. “ When the Spirit, the comforter, is come,” said he, “ whom I will send from the Father, he shall take of mine and shew them unto you ; he shall teach you all things, and bring them to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” Our Lord was not at that time speaking to his disciples of those miraculous pourings forth of the Holy Ghost,

Ghost, by which they were impowered to work the most astonishing miracles, in confirmation of the truths of the gospel; but of that influence which was to accompany his religion through all succeeding ages—an influence that will ever be necessary to revive those who are dead in trespasses and sins; to check our impetuous passions, to controul our headstrong lusts; to collect and fix the dissipated mind on God, the center of all perfection; to comfort the mourning penitent; to support the feeble-minded; to stablish, strengthen, and settle the weak believer; and to enable the Christian, who has arrived to the fulness of the stature of the measure of Christ, to hold communion and fellowship with the Father and the Son.

Our blessed Saviour sometimes seeks admission to our hearts by his providences. We are laid upon the bed of sickness; the couch of affliction is favourable to his gracious design: here we have been brought to a serious reflection on our ways; we have beheld ourselves guilty; we have earnestly implored the mercy and forgiveness of God; we have been profuse in our vows of amendment.

ment. Blessed, indeed, were such seasons of trial, if we did not, when they were removed, forget the rod of God which was upon us.

Perhaps our fortunes have been endangered, lessened, or wrecked; the most affecting distresses have occurred in our families; our children have been taken from our embraces, the desire of our eyes at a stroke; all things around us seemed in combination to make us poor, wretched, and forlorn. "Behold," says your Saviour, "I stand at the door and knock." He has been endeavouring by these means to wean you from your fondness for the world. You have abounded in blessings, but you had forgotten the hand that bestowed them: he has taken them from you, to convince you of the instability of every thing in the present world, and to direct your attention and to fix your regards on eternity; upon that world which is future, better, and durable: he has been endeavouring to obtain for himself a place in those hearts of yours, which have been too long occupied with present unsatisfying vanities.

Give me your attention, then, whilst I endeavour to improve this discourse. "Behold,"

hold," says Jesus Christ, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man open unto me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." This same divine person is represented to us in Solomon's Song in the very situation described by the text, but in still more affecting language: "It is the voice of my beloved," saith the church, "that knocketh; open to me, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."

Our Saviour has, it may be, long waited for admission to our hearts; he has addressed us by various means; he has put his word into our hands, brought his gospel to our ears, has followed us with prosperous and adverse providences; and, after all, we have refused him admission: yet he stands and knocks, but he knocks in vain.

He hath striven with us by his good spirit. In the hours of retirement, in those moments of serious reflection which solitude has afforded us, we have had some alarming suspicions growing in our breasts, that all was not right with us: our consciences

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have fairly told us that we were strangers to the religion of the heart; that we had the form of godliness, but were destitute of the power; that we had taken up the shadow instead of the substance, and that the gospel had no more influence upon us than what agreed with our worldly maxims of profit, or of pleasure: we have found ourselves powerfully persuaded to reform; the intemperate man has resolved to forsake his excesses; the swearer his oaths; the breaker of the sabbath has determined that he would regularly attend the house of God, and worship in the great congregation;—each has found strong propensities to “cease from evil, and to learn to do well.”

The thoughts of death, and the awful tribunal of God, have forced an impression upon their minds, and, convinced of the necessity, they have formed the resolution of forsaking sin; they have determined to fly for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them. These have been the strivings of the good spirit of God. “As I live,” saith the Lord, “I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should

should turn from his wickedness, and live." He has been endeavouring to persuade, he has endeavoured to awe you to repentance. Has he succeeded? have you turned from those iniquities which you once thought would prove your ruin? Or have you resisted his good-will towards you? have you done despite to the spirit of his grace, stifled the workings of your conscience, forgotten all your resolutions, returned again to your follies, and trodden under foot the blood of the Son of God, freely offered to cleanse and to save you? If so, indeed your case is sad. It is an awful saying of the Almighty, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." The offers of his mercy to you must have an end. Forty years he bore with patience the incorrigible manners of Israel; at length, wearied with their ingratitude, obstinacy, and unbelief, he swore that they should never enter into his rest. Perhaps the years he has borne with you are many, and it may be they are now drawing to an end. Time is passing with rapid wings; death beckons you to the grave; eternity throws open to your view the throne of God, the judge seated, the books opened, the accusing angel standing

ready to present you, with all your guilt upon your head, before the dread tribunal of a pure, just, and holy God.—O, while there is time, while life lasts, escape for your lives! — Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: behold Jesus the mediator is yet ready to interpose between you and death. He gave his life a ransom for all; he triumphed over death for all; he ever lives to make intercession for all who believe on his name: whatever may have been your guilt, however great, continued, or aggravated, yet if now you will truly repent, if you will forsake your sins, if you will turn from your wickedness, you shall save your soul alive. “Behold,” says Jesus Christ, “I stand at the door and knock; if any man open unto me” — You observe here is no exception— “if any man open unto me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.”

With what words can we describe the supreme blessedness of those who have given a ready admission to this divine person! To live on terms of friendship with a crowned head; to have a sovereign calling upon us, knock at our door, and telling us, that if we
would

would open it, he would come in, and sup with us, and that we should sup with him; how enviable, in the estimation of mankind, would be our situation! But what would such an earthly honour be, compared with that which cometh from above? what such distinction to the promise which the text contains, that he, who is the King of kings and Lords of lords, will come to each of his attentive servants, and sup with him? The meaning of this gracious promise obviously is, that if we do truly believe on his name; if we make his merits our confidence, his all-sufficient atonement our plea, our trust, and our glory; if we love and obey him; he will give us to enjoy the present comfort of this faith and obedience—a sense of our pardon effectually applied to our consciences, and producing that peace of God which passeth all understanding. This, as our church expresses it in her Communion Service, is to dwell in Christ, and Christ in us: it is what nothing on earth can give or take away. Jesus now comes, and sups with them: he supports them by his providence; he delivers them by his power; he guides them by his counsel; and hereafter he will take them to his glory.

He shall sup with me : believers who have admitted their Saviour to their hearts here, shall hereafter be admitted to the presence and glory of God. They shall be introduced as welcome guests to the marriage-supper of the Lamb ; they shall be presented faultless before the eternal throne with exceeding joy ; they shall be perfectly freed from every sin ; they shall be no more affected with sorrow ; tears shall be wiped away from all faces for ever. Are we the candidates for this blessedness ? are our hearts warmed and inspired with joy and gladness in the prospect of that inheritance which is above ? Oh, then, let us attend to our conversation, that it be consistent with these exalted hopes, and becoming the gospel of Christ ! Let our path be as the path of the just, which, like the dawning light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. “ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths, as becometh saints.” The example of Christ knocks for admission to our hearts. Let that heavenly deportment, that purity of manners, that amiable meekness, that mercy and compassion which adorned his life, be the subject of our invariable

riable imitation during our abode on earth; and let us look forward, in blessed hope, to that period, when we shall have his image more plainly traced through our whole being, see him as he is, and be like him for evermore.

S E R M O N VIII.

REPENTANCE NECESSARY TO SAL- VATION.

GEN. vii. 4.

*And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou,
and all thine house, into the ark.*

IF we take up the sacred volume of inspiration with a view to receive instruction, we certainly shall not close it with regret or disappointment.

The leading feature which we trace through every page, and which is delineated by the finger of God, is, that he is the righteous governor of the world; that he is the patron, the protector, the guide of all who put their trust in him, who love, and obey him; and that he is the vindicator of his own honour, the punisher of all those whose impiety calls
for

for his chastisement, or who provoke his vengeance.

It is a serious question, which St. Paul asks every presumptuous sinner, “ Despisest thou the forbearance and long-suffering of God, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ?” It is surely a question which ought to awaken their consideration, and lead them in time to supplicate the throne of mercy.

The subject with which my text is connected, affords me an opportunity of stating to you the necessity of repentance ; and, in neglect thereof, the certainty of punishment.

It is an important and all-concerning truth, which stands in connection with the history of Noah, that the Lord said, “ My spirit shall not always strive with man.” The Almighty has placed full in the view of those under the Christian dispensation, his goodness and his severity ; his mercy is freely offered to all ; he would have all men to be saved : his blessed Son gave himself a ransom for all ; but if his tenders are neglected, if his will is opposed,

opposed, if the ransom is despised, we are here warned of the sad consequence; there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but “a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.”

So fruitful was the evil of sin, that in the eighth generation from Adam we read, that “God saw the wickedness of man that it was great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually.” The result was natural; it was what might be expected; it was what ought to fill us with holy fear: the Lord said, “I will destroy man whom I have created.” When God arises to destroy, how terrible must that destruction be! Little do sinners know of the glorious Majesty they are insulting; little do they consider the power of that arm, which “weigheth the heavens as in a balance;” little do they regard the might of that God, who “taketh up the islands as a very little thing, who holdeth the winds in his fists, and the sea in the hollow of his hand.” He is strong, and yet he is patient, though he is provoked every day.

He is patient. Although a sentence so decided had gone out from his lips, “I will destroy

stroy man;" yet judgment appears as his strange work; he will not give way to his just anger, without affording space for repentance; nor, after all, will he mingle the righteous in the destruction of the ungodly. Noah found grace in his sight: amidst abounding iniquity, Noah was just; compared with the manners of his generation, he was perfect; he walked with God; his conduct was regulated by the will of God; his hopes were fixed on that covenant of mercy, promised to Adam in the seed of the woman; he strove with sincerity and ardor to please the God of his life, and he was not disappointed—he found grace in his sight; God determined to raise him up as a monument to the generations to come, that it shall be well with the righteous, amidst all the calamities which befall the ungodly.

God said unto Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before me; make thee an ark." Noah obeyed, and began the building. St. Peter tells us, that Noah was a preacher of righteousness: he preached to the world by his example, by his doctrine; and, what ought to have affected them most, he was daily raising the ark in their sight, destined to bear him above those

those waters, which were to bring universal destruction upon the earth. One hundred and twenty years he was employed on this stupendous work: so long did he warn and entreat them; so long did he preach to them on the subject of God's intended visitation—and yet his entreaties were in vain: they suspected that all his preparation originated in the false apprehensions of age, or the weakness of intellect; but the ark went forward, and at length the work was finished. Eternal justice had long and patiently held the balance; but the world was still wanting in every fruit of repentance. Busy, gay, inconsiderate, sensual, violent, and impious; this devoted race had now filled the measure of their iniquities.

“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark.” They went in according to the command of God, “and the Lord shut them in.” And,

Surely the shutting of this door of the ark by the hand of God sounded in the ears of the surrounding world like the deep-portending thunder. The preacher of righteousness
had

had entered his place of refuge, and lo! the face of the heavens darken all around, the clouds pour down their torrents, and the fountains of the great deep are broken up; they spread over the vallies, they cover the hills; they rise to the summit of the mountains, whilst the astonished, terrified, despairing multitudes are overtaken whithersoever they fly, and sink together in the mighty waters. Others crowd around the rising ark, which had been so long the object of their vain speculation, perhaps of their contempt: they climb its sides, but, alas! the door is shut; remorse tears their conscience, but remorse and repentance are now too late; they call to the preacher of righteousness, in hope that there still remains another offer of mercy, but in vain—the door is shut, the hour is past—the ark rises, and leaves them to perish in the deluge!

Great God! may the recollection of thy past judgments suitably affect this congregation; incline our hearts to make thy mercy our refuge, whilst the accepted time remains, and the day of salvation still continues.

I have just noticed some of the leading circumstances

cumstances naturally connected with the Mo-
saic history of the deluge. Continue your
attention whilst I attempt to improve these
circumstances to ourselves.

It is an obvious truth, not only asserted by
revelation, but established by constant expe-
rience, that the deluge which destroyed the old
world, did not destroy sin. Our blessed Sa-
viour, who was well qualified to judge of the
human heart, affirms, that from thence pro-
ceed all those iniquities which defile the man.
Had the sanction of so high an authority been
wanting, the practice of the world would have
fully established the truth.

Can you name an enlightened society that
has not found it necessary to lay restraints up-
on the desperate wickedness of the human
heart? Is it not too plain, from numberless
instances, that even the severest pains and pe-
nalties are insufficient to keep it within pro-
per bounds? This, as our Church expresses it,
is the fault and corruption of human nature.
It is fallen from God; it is prone to evil, and
that continually. It will, however, be admit-
ted, that a well-directed education will have a
wonderful

wonderful influence in suppressing the evil propensities of mankind. But where shall we find the man, who, upon a deliberate and honest review, will not be compelled to say with David, "My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly." This is the fact. Our nature is entirely spoiled; it is thoroughly depraved: I infer, therefore, that the Christian dispensation was necessary, that it was proper, and that it will be effectual for salvation to all who receive it, who lay their hearts open to its influence, and who regulate their practice by its precepts.

It was necessary. God, from the perfect purity of his nature, must be for ever irreconcilable to sin. Need I adduce proof of a fact so obvious? Will not the exile of Adam from the peaceful abode of Paradise suffice? Must I mention the curse of Cain? Will you require a further evidence than the destruction of the old world; the total overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; the many afflictive scourges which have appeared in the several ages of the world, famine, war, plague, and pestilence? Shall I apply myself more immediately to your own hearts, to that general unhappiness, that dissatisfaction

satisfaction which you find within yourselves? Shall I bring to your recollection the various disappointments which you have already known in life; those losses which you have sustained; those afflictions which you have known in your families; the distressing hours which have been forced upon you by the sickness, pain, sufferings, and dissolution of those you loved? Is there not proof sufficient, that he who formed us has had cause to be offended with us; and that all we feel, and all we fear, is but the just award of him whose throne is established in righteousness? This is the case; and yet he desireth not our misery; he takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner. I affirm, then, that the Christian dispensation was necessary; for this dispensation, whilst it unfolds the source of all our wretchedness, affords the means of perfect deliverance. The world is wicked; the law condemns; destruction threatens; but the God of love, in the gospel of his Son, addresses himself to each of us, saying, "Come thou, and thine house, into the ark." The church of Christ is this ark; into which the faithful are admitted by baptism, who distinguish themselves by true repentance, and who, by a spiritual union with Jesus Christ, shall be saved

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from that general ruin which awaits the unrighteous. He that once said, "I will destroy man whom I have made," hath said, that "the earth, and all that is therein, shall be burnt up."—Happy are they who escape in time to the hope set before them!

The Christian dispensation is proper. It has opened a door of mercy, whilst it secures, in the utmost lustre and harmony, every attribute of God. The blessed Jesus takes the offending nature upon himself; he restores to the divine law its full honour; he fulfils that covenant of works which Adam broke; and at last suffers the death of the cross, to expiate the guilt, to make atonement for the sins of the world. And hence, though our lives are forfeited; though we must be subject to the common calamities of mortal creatures; yet he hath purchased for all who believe on him a right and title to a future state of immortal happiness: and thus it appears also, that the Christian dispensation is effectual; it is "the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth." As surely as God provided an ark for the saving of righteous Noah and his house; so surely will Jesus Christ be found a sure

sure refuge to all who are united to him by a true faith, and who by virtue of that union bring forth the fruits of righteousness.

The gospel of Christ, then, ought to be esteemed glad tidings. When Noah returned to his family, after his interview with God, and told them, that God had said, "The end of all flesh is come before me—behold I bring a flood of waters upon the earth, which shall destroy man and beast from off the earth;" what think you were their sensations? Do you not suppose that they were filled with amazement and terror? But when he added, "God hath directed me to build an ark; and hath assured me of his favour, and that he will preserve you and me;" no doubt their sorrow was turned into joy; their hands, their eyes, their hearts, were lifted up to express their devotion, and their thankfulness to the Almighty, who in the midst of deserved judgment could thus remember mercy.

But how often and how solemnly do the ministers of religion proclaim the wrath of God as revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and how

often do they proclaim it in vain! Their words seem to many as idle tales; they will not believe; they will not lay these things to heart. There is an unconquerable obstinacy in the human heart, a prominent degree of perverseness, which, like the leading feature in a portrait, strikes the eye of every beholder. The old world hazarded a deluge, rather than hearken to the voice of God, rather than repent and turn to him: the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah rather chose to brave the fiery tempest, than listen to the warning voice of righteous Lot—"He seemed like one that mocked to his sons-in-law."

We see the same disposition in St. Paul's auditory: when he preached Jesus and the resurrection of the dead unto them, some mocked. The inhabitants of Jerusalem chose to perish, rather than admit an idea of the truth of the prophecy of Jesus Christ, that their city and temple should be destroyed. My brethren, God said he would bring a flood upon the earth, and he brought it: he said he would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their abominations, and the Lord rained fire from heaven and consumed them: he said, by the mouth of
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his Son, that he would destroy Jerusalem, for the infidelity of the Jews—Jerusalem and its sacred temple are no more. “Therefore,” says St. Paul, “we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip: for, if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him.”

You behold, then, in the case of Noah, in the case of Lot, in the case of Jerusalem, and, in short, in every case, how unlikely popular opinion is to guide us rightly.

The world in general are satisfied, in the important concerns of religion, with the fashionable sentiments and the prevailing practices of those around them. Even those who esteem themselves Christians, will not be at any pains to examine the gospel of Christ; and therefore, when the indispensable requisites to make a Christian are pressed upon them under the

sanction of this authority, we seem to them like those who mock. When we offer them the doctrine of Jesus Christ to establish the necessity of conversion : when we assure them that no merely exterior exercises, no forms, no ceremonies, no professions will avail, if there is not a renovation of the heart : when we tell them, in the express words of our Saviour, that no man can come unto the Father but by him ; that unless sinners repent they must perish : when we place before them the tremendous consequences of living and dying in a state of sin ; the sad end of those who love this present world in preference to that which is to come ; the final misery of all who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God : the whole is mere matter of amusement ; we seem to them like those who mock.

Are any of you so persuaded ? Have the threatenings of Omnipotence no weight ? Is it nothing to you that Jesus Christ hath said, that the judge shall say to the whole assembly of sinners, at the left hand, in the last day, “ Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Consider,
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my brethren, it must be something to every one who lives in sin, and who dies without repentance. There is an ark provided; the Almighty bids you flee into it, and be safe: he gave the old world space for repentance; he affords you the same. Perhaps a great part of your appointed time is gone; your lives are reduced to a span; a few years will convince many, a few more will convince the whole of this congregation of the faithful execution of God's threatenings to the wicked, and of his promises to the righteous. The interval that remains previous to that conviction is short indeed; and yet consider how unspeakably important that work which you have to do. It is because this reflection is not pursued, that we see so many of our fellow mortals, tottering with age and with infirmities, upon the brink of the grave, instead of preparing for the solemnities of death and of judgment, consuming their few remaining moments in the most idle pastimes, pressing with an affectation of eagerness to scenes of private vice and public folly. But, alas! when to the altars of God's mercy! when engaged in the examination of their own hearts! when indulging the penitential tear! when employed in the fervours

of devotion ! when applying to the wounds of Jesus Christ !—You will allow the serious situation of your ministers, when you hear the solemn charge each of them receives from God.

“ O son of man, I have set thee as a watchman unto the house of Israel ; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his wickedness, but his blood will I require at thine hand : but if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he does not turn from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thine own soul.”

Under the serious impressions of this charge, knowing the importance of our office, we warn ; knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men ; but, alas ! how weak are our efforts !

“ Turn thou us, Lord, and so shall we
be

be turned." Give us to know that the solemn decision of eternity depends upon our union with the head of thy church ; that spiritual Noah, for whose sake his whole house shall be saved.

We are assured by an apostle, that there is salvation in no other. As Noah by the appointment of God builded the ark, as the dimensions and form were expressly given of God, so is Jesus set forth to be a Prince and a Saviour.

Come, then, whilst the voice of mercy sounds, before the storm gathers, before the right hand of the Lord taketh hold on vengeance ; come ye and your families into the ark. Are your children dear to you ? then teach them the fear of the Lord ; like Noah, like righteous Lot, preach to them by the excellence of your example : form them to the habits of devotion ; impress their infant minds with a sense of the love of God, in redeeming the world by Jesus Christ ; accustom them to think of the glorious state of immortality for which they are destined ; remember that they are under your charge, and that their future happiness or misery is in a measure suspended

suspended upon your care. If their souls are dear to you, guard them against the follies, the extravagance, and dissipation of the world, against intemperance, falsehood, and impiety; let them be persuaded, that to stand singular with Noah, to escape with Lot, is better than to have a devoted world on their side, better than to be consumed with the cities of the plain; in a word, that it is infinitely preferable to follow Jesus Christ, under every species of insult and persecution, than to be associated with those whose end is destruction. Set before them, in your own example, the supremely wise choice of Moses, who willingly suffered affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season. If this is your decision, you will cheerfully on this day share in the seal of that covenant of peace which Jesus ratified on the cross: you will view with gratitude and love that new flood which, from the windows of heaven, was poured down upon mankind through the wounds of Jesus Christ, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

S E R M O N IX.

THE SALVATION OF MAN IS BY
GRACE.

EPHES. ii. 8.

*By grace are ye saved through faith, and that
not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*

THAT men should be reconciled to the propositions of divine mercy, made to them by their Creator, is but a reasonable expectation; and yet the contrary is the case. Though fallen, weak, and imperfect creatures, they affect to prescribe for themselves, and trace out the plan to be adopted by the Almighty which they esteem proper to recover them from their lapsed state, and to make them happy with himself for evermore.

False

False to their trust would those be found who take the lead in the offices of religion, were they to countenance or encourage the claims of ignorance, or the assuming pretensions of pride and self-sufficiency. Our duty is clear; we are to present to you the method appointed of God for salvation. We entreat you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God in this way; ye have your choice, either to accept it, or to be undone: the plan of salvation is explicitly declared in my text, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

The whole system of Christianity rests upon a few obvious principles; principles which require no labours of philosophy to investigate, no deep intention of the mind to comprehend: they are pointed out as with a sunbeam in the sacred records. It is declared that a way-faring man, though a fool, ignorant as a peasant of every other science, shall not err therein. With such means of information as we enjoy, to remain ignorant of the fundamental truths of religion, is to prove one of them; namely, that the understanding

ing is darkened, and the mind alienated from the life of God.

The gospel is a discovery of grace in favour of human nature, formed originally pure, holy, and happy, but which by transgression is become subject to all the consequences of guilt, present sorrow, and future misery. The intervention of this grace finds us at an absolute distance from God, his image defaced, his laws broken, his attributes dishonoured, our backs turned upon our Creator, and, what is still worse, without any solicitude to return to him, without any anxiety to regain his favour, to insure his blessing, or to obtain his kingdom.

This was the state of the Ephesians. “ You hath he quickened,” saith our apostle, “ who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of
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of wrath even as others : but God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Jesus Christ : for by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God."

It is this view of man, however humbling it may seem, it is this view of the process of redemption, that gives to my text its full energy. God beheld the ruin which Satan had brought upon the work of his hands ; he saw, and he pitied ; he saw, and he determined to save : this was grace. When our guilty forefather stood convicted before the unveiled presence of the Lord God, he did not seem to have entertained the smallest hope of forgiveness, nor did he so much as ask it. He had incurred the penalty, and he then expected the execution of the solemn sentence, "Thou shalt surely die." Hard indeed must he

he have felt his situation, when no plea remained but the accusation of his wife: "The woman that thou gavest to be with me, she gave me, and I did eat." "The serpent beguiled me," said she, "and I did eat." Thus fallen together, they awaited their fate; they saw no way open for the communication of mercy, and yet in that moment of anxious dread it was that grace interposed, that grace triumphed, that grace saved them from despair and death. This may be called the dawn of grace; it first beamed from this promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

My brethren, when we are tempted to ascribe to ourselves those powers which are necessary to salvation, we shall do well to turn our reflections to this rock from whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit from whence we were digged; for in Adam all died. "By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" and it is by grace alone that we are saved. It is grace, which implies the most free and undeserved proffer and communication of goodness to those who had neither merit to deserve nor
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inclination

inclination to seek it ; goodness existing in the divine mind, and effecting all the purposes of mercy in the person of Jesus Christ. “ In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem those that were under the law.” This is called grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, “ though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.” Was not this grace ? Though he was rich, glorified with the Father before all worlds, receiving from prostrate seraphim and cherubim the ascriptions of glory and praise, that he should so regard us in our low estate ; divest himself of every distinction by which the godhead was known in the realms of light ; assume the form of a servant, submit to the most obscure situation, to a life marked with self-denial, by suffering, and by death, even the death of the cross ; and this, that we might be made rich.—This was grace : “ By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God.”

The apostle has here, with his usual accuracy, pointed out to us several distinct circumstances,

cumstances, as combining to form salvation by the Son of God. Fix them in your minds, my brethren, and you will avoid much perplexity in your notions of the œconomy of redemption; you will be able to form more distinct and satisfactory notions of its several parts. First, salvation—a term which comprehends a deliverance from the present power and dominion of sin. This is evidently implied in the text. The apostle had been just enumerating those particular vices unto which the Ephesians had been addicted; and he affirms, that by grace they were saved, or delivered from them. It implies, also, the progressive sanctification of the heart, as you will observe in another part of the apostle's writings: “After,” says he, “the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his mercy, or grace, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” So that the renewing of our nature to righteousness, and true holiness, is an essential part of salvation; and this is done in the hearts of believers day by day.

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It implies, lastly, that full deliverance, that final conquest over sin, which every Christian shall obtain at death. It comprehends that crown of righteousness, that exceeding weight of glory which is reserved in the heavens, and which the Lord, the righteous judge, will at the last day bestow upon all who love his appearing. "We are justified by his grace, that we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life."

Ye observe, then, that this word "saved" is wonderfully rich in its signification, and comprehensive in its blessings; including the pardon of sin, the sanctification of our persons, and life eternal. We are thus saved by grace; that is, as I have already observed, in the most free and gratuitous manner, God having had nothing to move him thereunto but his own love and compassion. The means or instrument by which these blessings are to be made ours, is marked out for us by the term "faith:"—"By grace are ye saved through faith." I will not take up your time, in giving you the various significations of this word in different parts of scripture. The connection,

nection, in the present instance, sufficiently frees it from ambiguity: it is that medium which God uses to make salvation ours. It must be presupposed, that the energy of the Holy Spirit has made way for the cultivation, growth, and perfection of this grace, by bringing us to a proper knowledge of ourselves. We see that by nature we are lost creatures; we feel ourselves wretchedly destitute of every inclination to the work and service of our God; we find that with the divine image we have lost our happiness; and that nothing but the fullest conviction in the mind, that there is a possibility of being restored to his favour, who for our sins hath been justly displeased with us, can at all prevent our approaches to despondency, or ease the pangs of an awakened conscience.

Thus far we conceive the person to be brought by the grace of God, before the value, excellency, and necessity of salvation will be discerned, or the soul be fitted for the subsequent operation of faith.

We suppose, then, that the mind is sick of sin, suffering the reproaches of a soul loaded

with guilt, and asking, with inexpressible anxiety, "What shall I do to be saved?"

The gospel tidings of salvation by grace, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, being suited to the desires, the wants, and the hopes of the penitent, the work of faith begins. God having given the most undoubted evidence of his good will to man, by sending his Son into the world upon this express condition, "that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life;" the fervent aspiration of the awakened mind is, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief:" I would embrace the words which thou hast spoken as the words of truth: I fly to thee for succour; make me, O my God, the subject of thy great salvation.

This is the language of faith; of the faith mentioned in my text. There are other kinds of faith, but this is that, which will ever distinguish itself from all others which assume its semblance; for, it will introduce peace to the conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost. I trust, that in this definition there is nothing that to you appears irrational; it certainly involves
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neither inconsistency nor contradiction. Ye must surely allow the attainment of it to be most desirable, to such as have received any deep impressions on their minds of their own sinfulness, weakness, and insufficiency, and of the vast importance of God's favour.

Our Saviour has afforded us a very apt observation to illustrate this truth, in these words: "The whole have no need of the physician, but those that are sick." There are few amongst us so far depraved, as to deny the excellence of the character of Jesus as the good physician; but many who acknowledge this, are, in their own estimation, whole, and do not see any immediate occasion to apply to him. Ye know this to be exactly the case in common life. We may have the highest opinion of a physician; we may speak highly of his abilities to others; but, while we feel no disease, and continue to persuade ourselves of our health, we shall not apply to him; we still acknowledge that he is a good physician: this resembles an ordinary degree of faith. Another, who has the very same opinion of his abilities, is sick: he therefore puts them to the test; he makes use of his prescriptions,

submits to the course he directs, and relies with confidence upon his judgment. This is a faith of application: he believes, and is made whole. "I am not come to call the righteous," said our Saviour, "but sinners to repentance." Not that there was a single individual breathing upon the earth that did not stand in need of his gracious assistance; but there were those who, from the confirmed habits of self-approbation, from a conceit of their own goodness, their moral attainments, and their superior virtues, thought proper to reject the grace, mercy, and salvation, offered to them by the Son of God,

There yet remains one important point in my text. It is this; that the faith, by which we apply to Jesus Christ as our Saviour, or as the good physician, is the gift of God. We cannot place it in our own hearts; it is not a work of ours, as it immediately follows, "lest any man should boast." The whole scheme of redemption is indeed wonderful. So truly had God our best, our everlasting interests in view, that he did not choose to leave them to the uncertain issue of a faith, to be cultivated wholly by ourselves in a soil so unfriendly to every

every thing that is spiritual and divine. “ By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” Have we, then, my brethren, upon the whole, any reason to complain? Have we not cause, on the contrary, to admire and adore that gracious Being, who has condescended to call himself our Father, and who has, with such wondrous effect, proved himself our friend?

There is not one of you in his courts to-day, but who ought to take up the language of the devout Psalmist, and say, “ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name: bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who pardoneth all thy sins; who healeth all thine infirmities; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with mercy and loving kindness.” If we persist obstinately in sin, we are cut off from those benefits; but the fault must lie at our own door. If we refuse the blessings of the gospel, so freely offered to us, we shall perish; but he will be justified. He has done every thing for us that was proper for him to do, indeed much more than we

were able to ask or think : sad will our state be, if he hath done all in vain !

Be persuaded to examine yourselves, nor fear what may be the result of a thorough knowledge of your own hearts.

In proportion as you apply to this serious study, ye may perhaps make discoveries, by no means pleasing to yourselves : but ye have this reflection to console you, that whatever your state be, it will admit of a remedy. Ye may, perhaps, detect yourselves as having cultivated a system of religion very opposite to that of my text, " By grace ye are saved through faith." We are too apt to indulge opinions of our own importance. Ye may be of importance, indeed, as ye relate to each other ; you may be justly entitled to certain distinctions from your respective situations : but when you transfer this importance to the business of religion, the question appears with a very different aspect. Before God we are accounted sinners ; in his sight humility will be our greatest ornament, a broken and contrite heart in the highest estimation *. If it has been his

* Bishop Sherlock in loc.

good pleasure to put our salvation upon the foot of grace alone; if he has declared that this salvation shall be made ours by faith, and that not of ourselves, but that he will graciously bestow this faith also; what will become us so well as to render him unfeigned thanks for his goodness, and gratefully to accept what he so freely offers?

I shall close this discourse with the result of this doctrine of salvation by grace, as stated by St. Paul. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." You will hence observe how entirely estranged they are from the grace of God who live unholy lives, who continue in sin that grace may abound: the apostle affirms, that such are "dead whilst they live."

To conclude. Let us remember that a day of solemn account awaits us all. Eternity opens to our prospect the throne of God, the Judge seated, and the recording volumes opened. We then must each give an account
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of himself to God. It will then appear how we have spent our time; how we have employed our talents. If at that interesting period it shall be found, that we have abused the grace of God to the purposes of licentiousness, great and aggravated will our condemnation be!—May God Almighty make us all the subjects of his grace now, and of his kingdom and glory hereafter.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X.

AFFLICTION SALUTARY.

PSALM cxix. 71.

*It is good for me that I have been afflicted,
that I might learn thy statutes.*

I N situations which are peculiarly trying, in situations which are more or less common to all men, it is very useful to observe how others have conducted themselves before us ; by what means men of real godliness, men of distinguished piety and virtue, have borne up under the pressures of a calamitous life, and in the most trying seasons of adversity have held fast their confidence in God.

The words of my text were penned by one whose experience had taught him the use of affliction ; they are the result of deliberate observation on its influence upon his own heart.

Few characters furnish us with greater vicissitudes ; few afford us a more interesting series of success and disappointment, of joy and of sorrow.

He was born in an humble situation ; the son of Jesse, an obscure shepherd, accustomed to attend his father's flocks, he was an entire stranger to the refined policy, the intrigues, the dissipation of courts : whilst he followed the ewes, and led the lambs to the fold, he preserved his innocence and his peace.

The counsels of God are unsearchable ; his ways past finding out. This shepherd's son was appointed to rule a kingdom. The divine providence opened the way from the sheep-cote to the throne, and exchanged the crook for the sceptre ; but this was the post of danger. We covet riches, we covet distinction, without once suspecting how much our
integrity

integrity will be exposed by them, to what hazards our pre-eminence will lead us.

When David was a stripling, little in his own eyes, the least in his father's house, his affiance in God was strong : he successfully defended his fold from the attacks of the lion and the bear. In the name of the God of Israel he met, fought, and conquered the fierce Goliath; but when he had ascended the throne of Israel, he sunk into the lap of soft indulgence, he surrendered himself to his passions : the conqueror of the giant of Gath became the captive of Bathsheba; and he who was once so tender of the life of Saul his enemy, set his friend Uriah in the front of the battle.

The equitable administration of God hath decided, that if his people sin, their iniquities shall be visited with stripes. David sinned, and the severe chastisement of Heaven followed; his crown thenceforward became a crown of thorns; he had committed evil secretly, but his punishment was in the sight of all Israel; his children were guilty of the greatest enormities, and Absalom, his favourite son, attempted his

his kingdom and his life, and fell by the sword in the midst of unnatural rebellion. So fully did David experience the truth of this declaration, that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God. Happy was it for him that such visitations had their desired effect ! Blessed is the man who can utter with sincerity the language of my text : “ It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.”

There are few of us, if we are accustomed to reflection, but must have felt some sensible emotions of grief on the account of the general subjection of human nature to affliction and calamity ; and yet there are few who have made the word of God their study, and pursued with attention the œconomy of divine providence, but must acquiesce in the assertion of my text, “ It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”

Were we destined to live here always, or did the end of the present life terminate our existence, to be exposed to the interruption of disappointment, pain, and sickness, would appear to be a rigorous and useless tax on our
felicity :

felicity : but when we consider ourselves to be only in the first stage of our being ; that our nature in its present state is unmeet for the manifestation of that glory which is hereafter to be revealed ; when we consider this world as the school of providence, where we are in training for a state of immortality, the chastisements of our Father and Creator assume an aspect of wisdom, beneficence, and love ; afflictions, though for the present they are not joyous but grievous, then are viewed as working in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and in the end everlasting life.

Uninterrupted prosperity, uninterrupted health, a freedom from domestic trials, have a direct tendency to satisfy the mind with the present scene of things, and to make that a place of rest, which was designed only as a transient accommodation. The young heir, who, to obtain knowledge, is sent to traverse foreign realms, may, whilst moving in the gay circles of pleasure, or swimming in affluence, forget his native country and his father's house : but if his extravagance and dissipation bring him into difficulties ; if he is exercised with various trials, imprisoned, or enslaved,

slaved, the first objects which recur to his memory are his parents, his home, and the blessings to be enjoyed there. Just so does the divine providence deal with us. While, like the church of Laodicea, we are full, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, religion affords us no comfort; the objects of it do not appear formed to console: but let us figure to ourselves a person possessed of affluence, long accustomed to gay habits and expensive pleasures; his face well known in the circles of private vice or public folly; surrounded by crowds of pretended friends, the fond admirers of his taste and magnificence; let us suppose such a one the subject of a sudden reverse of fortune, the sacrifice of artifice and perfidy, becoming at once poor and solitary, experiencing the pungency of this affecting truth, that men may be great and prosperous in society, but they must suffer alone—now, in such a situation, the mind is open to conviction, the soul is reduced to that condition which renders it susceptible of religious instruction, and devout impression; the sanctuary which the gospel holds forth to the unfortunate, the full compensation it offers for that discipline
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unto which the heart is subjected by adversity, will lead those who chearfully submit to its influence to adopt the language of the text, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Or suppose a man who has lived long in the uninterrupted possession of health, indulging the flattering idea that his mountain is so strong that he shall never be moved, intent upon the objects of the present world, riches, pleasure, or distinction: these he has suffered to ingross his whole heart, and left him no relish for any thing serious or religious. See the hand of God upon this man; he is laid upon a bed of sickness, and this bed affords him a season for reflection; his past life passes in review before him, and the long-forgotten concerns of a future world appear in full force, and make him sigh for the very disquietude of his heart. The merciful overtures of God made to penitent sinners then appear, as the wise man expresses himself, "like apples of gold set in pictures of silver:" the heart, softened by chastisement, is now brought to this submissive language, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Happy has it been with those whose returning health and future

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life have confirmed the salutary purposes of affliction, by making them obedient to the statutes of God!

Or suppose you view the subject in another aspect, in that of domestic trials; in these, as in the personal exercises of pain and sickness, we may associate the high and the low, the rich and the poor. The fatal and frequent interruption of family endearments applies with equal force to the hearts of all. We are surrounded by those we love, by those who have been the associates of our humble and our prosperous state; whose unshaken attachment has involved them in our sorrows, and elevated them to share our joys. These, alas! we have beheld languish, we have seen them die. Our children, like olive-branches, crowd our tables; we have watched with pleasure the dawnings of their reason; we have listened with rapture to the first lisplings of their infant wants; and we have encouraged them to make our bosoms the repository of their little cares: and what have been your feelings, if, when they were making rapid advances to maturity, they have
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been attacked with sickness? You have watched through the anxious night, and seen the burning fever consume them, or perhaps the more slow consumption gradually destroy the fond objects of your hope and of your love. You could not reconcile yourselves to these strokes; you could not discern that your attachment to these blessings, which were only lent you, was greater than your love to him who bestowed them; you idolized the gift, but forgot the giver, regarding the creature more than the Creator. It became necessary therefore that he should divide between you and your gods, and teach you that nothing is worthy of your supreme love and regard but his blessed self. It is well for you if you have viewed these visitations aright, and have been brought with submission to acknowledge, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

To these severe dispensations in the loss of outward comforts, we might add those of a more secret nature; I mean that distress which often possesses the minds of the truly serious, in regard to their final interests. In this respect it may with truth be said, that

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“ the heart knoweth its own bitterness.” Persons really conscious of their depravity, great imperfections, and daily guilt, cannot but feel a proportionable degree of anxiety for their own safety, in that state of endless existence unto which they are hastening. It is natural for them to revolve in their minds the great events which are to follow the hour of death; they are agitated with apprehensions, and are depressed with grief, lest the decisions of the last day should be against them. This kind of affliction, though it be extremely pungent, is productive of the best consequences; for it leads to a serious, sincere, and earnest enquiry as to the possibility of salvation, and to a search after it, with all the intenseness of persons who are seeking for hidden treasure. When once men become influenced by this solicitude, they are formed for the reception of the gospel, which is a dispensation of free grace and unmerited mercy in favour of the truly penitent.

In the progress, therefore, of that godly sorrow for sin, which worketh repentance unto life, the divine goodness is to be traced, and the subject of it will certainly, sooner or later,

later, be brought to say, "It was good for me that I have been afflicted."

It becomes obvious, then, in this view of the divine œconomy in the government of the world, that trials and afflictions, so far from being intended to do us any real injury, have, when sanctified, the happiest tendency to promote our real happiness.

It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that on too many afflictive dispensations are lost. They are brought into straits and embarrassments in their worldly affairs; or their persons become subject to pain or sickness; distresses occur in their families; and yet they see not "the rod, and who hath appointed it." Like the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, they weary themselves in resisting the hand that binds them; and like the deaf adder they shut their ears: they are deaf to that voice which every affliction carries with it, saying, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Such instances of insensibility are to be deplored. When the fatherly chastisements of our Creator are found ineffectual to reclaim

the finner, the case becomes dangerous; it demands at once our pity and our prayers.

Too often the end of affliction is defeated, from our not having cultivated any regular notions of the immediate superintendence of divine Providence. We acknowledge, indeed, that God is the great disposer of all events; that all our hearts are open, all our desires known, and that no secrets are hid from him: but this acknowledgment is not suffered to have a practical influence; it does not produce its proper effect in the conduct of our lives. We look to second causes, to the exclusion of the first; we ascribe to chance and fortune, and I know not what other senseless names, the proper attributes of God, concurring to produce the vicissitudes of human life: “But knowest thou not,” saith the High and Holy One, “that I the Lord do all these things?”

The close of my text is worth your consideration, it exhibits in one view the dispositions of a heart moulded by affliction to a right frame: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes;” and it immediately follows, “the law of thy
mouth

mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and of silver." This may serve, in the stead of many other observations, as a ground of improvement of this discourse. St. Paul has declared, that "if we are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then are we bastards, and not sons." Your situation is therefore by no means enviable, if you have been hitherto exempted from trouble. But we will not suppose this: we will rather imagine that as men you have shared the common lot; that you have had your trials and afflictions as well as others. The question is, then, Have you profited by them? have they made you better? have they weaned your affections from an inordinate love of this world? have they separated you from every thing that your conscience condemns in your former practice, and led you in your whole conduct to realize the words of the Psalmist, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy precepts?" If so, you will add, "it is good for me that I have been afflicted," If you have not a regard to the statutes of God; if you have no delight in his commandments; if religion has no deep and abiding influence in your hearts, now after affliction, what are you

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profited?

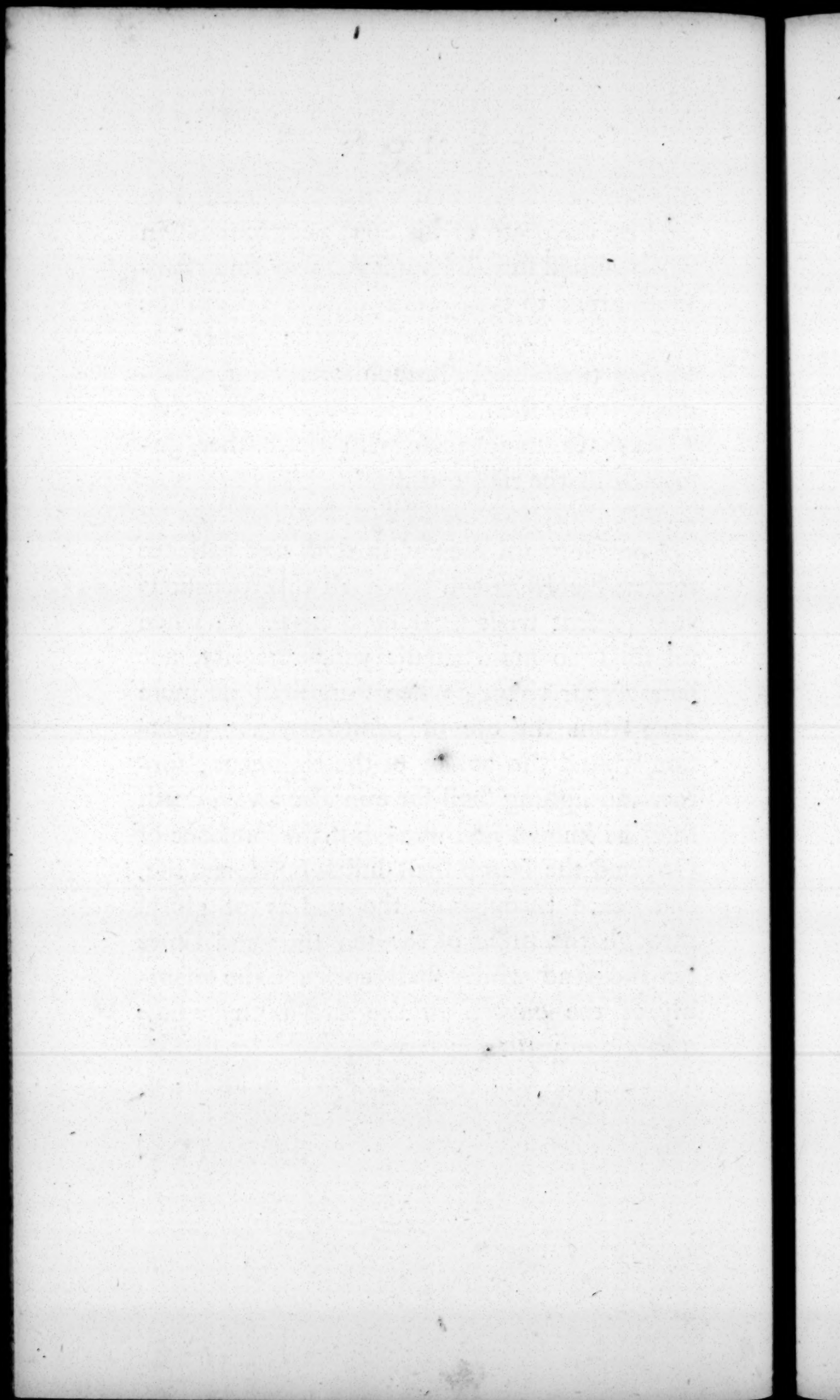
profited? Ye cannot each say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Ye went into the furnace dross, and you have returned unpurified.

The gracious intention of our heavenly Father, in his various dispensations towards us, is to fit us for a better world. We frequently want reminding that this is not our rest; that we are strangers and sojourners here below. Whatsoever we possess, riches, fame, or beauty, they will fade, they will flee away, they will die; it is piety alone that will survive the general wreck: and whatever means God makes use of to make us truly pious, we shall have final cause to say they have been good for us.

If you attentively consider the foundation of the Psalmist's piety, you will observe that it was laid in an habitual sense of his own insufficiency, his weakness, and his unworthiness. These led him to contemplate and to celebrate the greatness of the mercy of God. The piety of the Christian has a similar foundation; it is formed on an humble sense that man is by sin rendered wretched and miserable, but that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. If
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you are persuaded that you are reconciled to God by the death of his Son, your foundation will be found sure. Though you may find yourselves prone to evil, prone to swerve from the paths of God's commandments, and hence becoming the subject of much sorrow and affliction, yet this should inspire you with hope, that "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Look forward then with faith and patience to that blessed period when all that occasions your present trials shall be done away; when sin shall no more assault your integrity, nor betray your virtue; when tears shall no more drop from the eye of penitence, nor affliction wound the bosom of the righteous; sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away; death shall be known no more; but the presence of God and the Lamb shall diffuse light, and life, and peace throughout the realms of glory, through the midst of the ten thousand times ten thousand which shall compose the assembly of the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.



S E R M O N XI.

THE WORD OF GOD IS TRUTH.

I KINGS, xvii. 24.

*And the woman said unto Elijah, Now by this
I know that thou art a man of God, and that
the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.*

WE are extremely curious in searching
after books of entertainment; books
calculated to awaken our passions, and affect
our hearts.

Were we to read the inspired volume with
diligence, with faith, and with humility, it
would do more; it would not only affect,
but it would mend our hearts.

I may venture to affirm, that there are
contained in the Bible truths so immediately
addressed

addressed to all the sensibilities of our nature, that were we not far gone in depravity, we should feel their power, and acknowledge their super-excellence. St. Paul fully confirms this assertion, when he declares that the holy scripture contains truths “ that are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith, that is in Christ Jesus.”

By attending to the history connected with my text, let us endeavour to find out something that may confirm the fact, that the word of God is truth.

The text was addressed by a poor widow to Elijah, a prophet raised up by the Almighty, in the days of Ahab, king of Israel; a king who did evil in the sight of the Lord, above all that were before him. As eminent in wickedness as in rank and power, it became necessary for the Almighty to interpose for his correction: he sent Elijah to point out his abominations, and to warn him of those judgments which were impending. The prophet came unto the king, and acquainted him with the decisions of Heaven, in consequence of his sin. “ As the Lord God
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of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall be no dew nor rain these three years, but according to my word."

This part of the divine œconomy may seem extraordinary: the king sins, and his people suffer; but let it be considered, that the true character of a king is to be the father of his people; and if the people suffer any calamity through his folly or impiety, it should affect him more sensibly than suffering even in his own person; and besides, the heinousness and malignity of sin receives, from this circumstance, a more public impression of the abhorrence of God against it. This we see evidently in the case of David; he sinned, and the Lord sent a pestilence upon the people; which when the king beheld, he could not help expressing his affliction: when he saw the angel of the Lord which smote the people, he said unto the Lord, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done?"

And this we observe, through the history of the Old Testament, was the usual method in which the Almighty conducted himself, not
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only against supreme magistrates; but towards other public characters, against heads of families, visiting the sins of the father upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation. To an affectionate parent a penalty thus severe; must surely have operated more powerfully in the prevention of evil, than the dread of personal punishment.

Elijah faithfully executed his commission; he informed the king of those chastisements which Heaven was about to lay upon his country. It is not the business of the ministers of religion to hesitate in the declaration of those truths committed to them of God. Whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, it is their duty to warn with intrepidity, and to exhort every man, with the benevolent intention suggested by the apostle, of presenting every man faultless in the day of Christ.

Men are mistaken, when they suppose their pastors their enemies, in pointing out the malignity, the danger, the destruction that there is in sin.—St. Paul expressed his obligation to this important duty in this nervous language,

“ Woe is to me if I preach not the gospel :” and dangerous will be the case of those honoured with a like trust, if they are found bending to the follies, the caprice, the sins of any characters, however elevated, however great.

Elijah having delivered his message, the word of the Lord came unto him, and said, “ Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.” You will imagine, from the features already traced in the character of Ahab, that he was not likely to admire the prophet’s integrity : on the contrary, he instantly meditated vengeance ; and God saw it necessary to direct his servant to remove towards a brook, where in the approaching famine he would, for a time, have water ; and as to food, “ I,” says the Lord, “ have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.”

This should instruct us, that if we are obedient to the commands of Heaven ; if our ways are ordered aright ; if we make any sacrifices, in compliance with the word or the will of God ; he has engaged to charge himself

self with our interests: we ought to be persuaded that all who fear him, obey him, and put their trust in his promises, will find him faithful to his word, in guarding them against the want of any thing that is good.

It seems extraordinary that the ravens should on this occasion be employed in providing for the wants of the prophet of God. Known as they are to be voracious to a proverb, the circumstance is striking; but he who directed it frequently works by extraordinary means. When he has those who fear him to support, he will find means to support them; and his wisdom may appoint a way which shall have an immediate tendency to convince them that it is his doing; hence affording them a powerful stimulative to the full exercise of their faith and patience, in either doing or suffering his will.

The ravens brought bread and flesh in the morning, and at even; and thus was Elijah fed till the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

In consequence of this drought, the Lord again directed him to remove. "Arise, get thee

thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon." But the famine had extended even unto Zarephath; the rain had not dropped from heaven, and the earth had failed of her increase. To whom is the prophet sent for support? It must surely be to those who, provident against the day of want, had laid up goods for many years. No, my brethren, no such thing! "Behold," said God, "I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee." But certainly it must be to a widow far removed from indigence, having bread enough, and to spare.—Ye shall hear.

The prophet arose at the command of God, and went to Zarephath; "and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering sticks; and he called her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

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Could any situation appear more distressedly interesting; any object more unlikely to sustain the prophet of the Lord? A widow, poor, reduced to the last morsel, the little all remaining for the support of herself and infant son, this she is called to surrender to the urgent wants of a stranger. In a case like this, it was natural for her to hesitate, to offer her objections, to urge the circumstances of her situation:— I have but an handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse; two sticks only are requisite to prepare my all; I was about to dress it for me and my son, that we might eat it, and die.—This scene of severe trial ought to sink deep into your hearts; ye whom God hath enriched with abundance, who know not a day of want, whose cup of blessing is ever full: ye ought to consider how much you are indebted to the bounty of a beneficent God. “Aspire then to an imitation of his goodness; be ye followers of God as dear children.” Remember that you are but stewards of his manifold gifts; that you are strictly accountable to him for all you enjoy: certain it is, that “to whomsoever much is given, of him much will be required.”

The prophet saw the widow's anxiety, her

severe conflict between her duty and her poverty, her faith and her feelings: this moment of her distress was to be the moment in which God had determined to afford her help. "Fear not," said Elijah; "go and do as thou hast said;" provide for thyself and son: but I must have a testimony of your obedience; "make me a little cake first, bring it to me, and after make for thee and thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

This was a trial that required no common degree of faith. This widow was invited to place her trust implicitly in God; neither her meal nor oil was to increase until she had obeyed. Her obedience was to be the evidence of her faith, and in the exercise of both she was to be blessed. Her necessities were extreme: her affiance in God is put to the test, and behold the result.

"The barrel of meal wasted not, nor did the cruse fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah." This word therefore, in the mouth of this man of God, she found to be truth.

It is not probable, my brethren, that any of you have ever been involved in similar distress. Ye are strangers to the keen pressure of famine; you have not taken your last morsel to dress for yourselves and an only child, that ye might eat, and die.

The land in which we live is a land of plenty; a competency every where offers to the efforts of honest industry: but we have other concerns, and concerns of infinitely greater importance—we have souls that are immortal; these require sustenance of a spiritual nature; and God hath given unto us many exceeding great and precious promises that they may be sustained. A greater than Elijah calls himself the bread of life, and a fountain of water which springeth up unto everlasting life. He hath assured us, that whosoever eateth of the bread that he will give, shall never hunger; and whosoever drinketh of the water that he will give, shall never thirst: but, unhappily for us, we treat these promises as unmeaning allegory; we flight the word of eternal life; we do not seek to have it fulfilled in ourselves; and the sad consequence is, that many die in their sins, notwithstanding the rich provision
made

made in the gospel for their nurture, admonition, and salvation.

The widow, the subject of my text, was now delivered from all her apparent difficulties; from every real cause of sorrow, and from every imaginary one, formed by her fears. She had a prophet of the Lord residing with her, and a daily miracle wrought for her support. She fondly imagined that adversity had shotten its last arrow, and that all which remained was to be prosperity and peace.

But she had a child, an only child, for whose support the prophet had found her gathering two sticks, that she might dress for him her meal and her oil, that they might eat it, and die together. "It came to pass after these things," after all that God had done for her, "that the son of this woman fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him." Thus unstable are our earthly comforts! We may be raised to the most enviable height of fortune; we may say with the Psalmist, "My mountain stands so strong that it shall never be moved; surely goodness

and mercy will follow me all my days :” but it will come to pass, after all these things, that our pleasures, our enjoyments, our blessings, will sicken and die away, or we shall sicken and die away from them.

In an agony of distress, the poor widow came to Elijah, and said, “ What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God ? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son ?” When we are exercised with any sudden, unexpected, and severe visitation from God, especially when our dearest connections are broken by death, it is then extremely natural for us to turn our reflections inward, and to search there for the cause. What have I done, says the wounded heart, that God should thus afflict me ? And on these occasions our consciences frequently assume the character of this man of God : they faithfully accuse us of having been unworthy of his mercies ; of having set our affections on those things which are on the earth, and not on things above ; of having loved the creature more than the Creator ; of having idolized the gift, instead of worshipping

worshipping the Giver. Happy has it been for us, my brethren, if we have acknowledged the hand of God in our chastisements, and profited by his fatherly corrections.

It is in very faithfulness that he visits us, that he may cure us of our inordinate love for this present world. He observes our growing attachment to earthly things; that we are suffering family endearments and connections to twine about our hearts; and that we are fixing here as upon the only source of comfort and of joy: he therefore very wisely cuts them away at a stroke, that our thoughts may be turned to heaven, towards that source of ceaseless pleasures, endearments, and satisfaction, which are to be found at God's right hand for evermore.

When the widow had spread her complaint before the prophet, he said, "Give me thy son."—Permit me to make a moment's digression here. The name Elijah is very remarkable; it is compounded of two Hebrew names, both of which are used, throughout the Old Testament, to distinguish the Lord God of Israel; the one Eli, the other Jehovah: these abbreviated form the name Elijah. From

whence some have conjectured, that this prophet was a person of divine origin, who visited this earth in human form, on purpose to correct the infidelity, and impiety of his chosen people.

We know from the sacred history that he left the world in a fiery chariot, and ascended to heaven in a way unfashioned by the common lot of men.

But, without attempting to decide any thing upon these circumstances, let us indulge the common supposition, that he was a type of Jesus Christ. The language of the prophet is, "Give me thy son." And what was the request of the Son of God? "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." Blessed are those parents who hear and obey; blessed are those children who have been betimes devoted to this Almighty Saviour!

The prophet received the child from the widow's bosom, and took it up where he abode. Ah, Christians! what a soothing emblem is this, of the conduct of your blessed Master!

Master ! Have you lost the dear objects of your affections, have they been taken from your bosoms ? Sorrow not as those without hope : Jesus Christ has taken them to the realms of peace, which are his abode. Their happy spirits have mingled with the assembly of the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Console yourselves with this enrapturing idea, that at this moment, while we speak, they are gazing on the matchless perfections of God, they are attuning their golden harps to the high praises of the Great Supreme, and with myriads of angels singing, " Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts ; " or casting their crowns in homage at the feet of that compassionate Saviour, who has washed them from every pollution in his own blood : or, still living in their memory, perhaps they are anxious for us, left behind in this state of danger and of warfare ; perhaps they are exulting in the view of Christ ; praying for us, that our faith fail not ; interceding that we may hold out unto the end, that we may receive the crown of life, and be found worthy to enter the gates of the New Jerusalem. " Amen ! even so Lord Jesus ! " Suffer us not by a sinful life to forfeit those joys into which

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they are now entered ; let us not forfeit the approbation of God, and the smiles of thee, thou great Captain of our salvation : help us to aspire after the unutterable suavities of that immortal kingdom, the inhabitants of which shall never say that they are sick ; where no sorrow enters ; where no painful heart-rending separations shall bring our sins to remembrance ; for there shall be no more sin, nor any more death.

Gracious God ! that any who consider thy power to bless, and thine efforts to make happy, should despise thy love, reject thy grace, and awaken thy justice to the severe discipline of vengeance. Instruct us all to understand the infinite importance of thy favour ; dispose our hearts to a sincere reception of thy gospel ; make us zealous and constant in our obedience to thy will, that, becoming the present subjects of thy goodness, we may be the future partakers of thy glory.

Elijah stretched himself upon the child three times, and said, “ O Lord my God, I pray thee let this child’s soul come into him again.”

again." And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And he carried him down to his mother, and said, "See, thy son liveth." And she said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of God in thy mouth is truth."

In reading this part of sacred history, our ideas naturally press forward to the days of the Son of man. Here we see Jesus Christ, on various occasions, interesting himself in domestic calamities; sympathizing with an afflicted father, with a distressed mother, with the sorrowful sisters, and restoring from the dead the several objects of their love.

He indeed, with a tone of authority peculiar to himself, said to the damsel, "Tali-tha Cumi!" to Lazarus, "Come forth!" to the widow's son, "I say unto thee, arise!" and at his word they arise, they come forth.

My brethren, when we revolve in our minds the doctrine of a future resurrection, we seem bewildered; so many difficulties arise, so many doubts suggest themselves, that we may well ap-
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ply the reproof of our Saviour to ourselves, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe." Bad men, indeed, do not think at all, or they endeavour to persuade themselves, if they pretend to think, that there will be no resurrection. Dreadful asylum! they live like the beasts of the field, and the only hope they have is, that they shall die like them: but this is a false and a vain hope; there shall be a resurrection, "all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God." Men may at present turn a deaf ear to the voice of truth, they may appear indifferent to this the day of God's merciful visitation; but their hearing shall be restored when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, when the solemn procession of God and his Christ shall appear descending from the third heaven, and fixing the tribunal of eternal judgment. May your faith and your practice be such now, my brethren, as will entitle you to the approbation and acquittal of your Judge, at that solemn and all-concerning period: may you then be presented faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy.

In the review of the subject which I have
been

been considering, there is one circumstance which ought to affect your minds ; that is, the conclusion this widow drew from the blessings she had received, which was, that the word of God was truth. Every iota of it will be found so. He is faithful who hath promised ; every thing that he hath spoken shall have its accomplishment.

Trust him therefore, trust him with an humble affiance with all your interests. If you give his kingdom and his righteousness the first place in your estimation, all other things shall be added unto you. If he has cast your lot in a wealthy place, if you abound in affluence, forget not to do good and to communicate, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

If he took so much care of this poor widow and her son, be ye followers of God as dear children.

Imitate the example of him who went about doing good ; transcribe his amiable conduct into your lives, and be looking forward to that day, when Jesus Christ shall say, “ Well done,

done, good and faithful servant : I was hungry, and ye gave me meat ; thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; naked, and ye clothed me." He hath promised you his approval, and the word of God in his mouth shall be truth.

S E R M O N X I I .

T H E C H R I S T I A N C O U R S E .

I C O R . i x . 24 .

Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain.

CORINTH, the capital of Achaia, and one of the most wealthy in all Greece, very soon afforded many converts to Christianity. St. Paul, by his labours among them, was made eminently useful, by bringing many of them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Being now absent from them, the apostle addressed them, by this epistle, to press upon them uniformity of sentiment in regard to the doctrines of the gospel, to excite them
to

to purity of manners in their lives and conversation, and to a steady perseverance to the end in the good way marked out for them.

The apostle having, during his residence among them, observed that their city afforded many splendid shews—fighters, wrestlers, racers—takes the advantage of their accustomed diversions, to lead their attention to such as engaged in the race.

“ Know ye not,” says he, “ that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize ?” There are numbers that enter the lists, and they all run ; but there can be only one so fortunate as to receive the plaudits of the spectators, the approbation of the judge, and the crown of victory.

Do you observe the methods which are taken to ensure success ? “ Every one of them that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things.” He diets himself, he avoids every species of luxury, every indulgence that might have a tendency to disqualify him for the race, to render his success dubious, or finally to defeat his enterprize. Consider the object for
which

which they each endure this rigid abstinence, for which they are temperate in all things : they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, composed of the fading leaf, which, after all their care, must decay, and be soon no more.

St. Paul was extremely happy in his allusion to a race, to illustrate the Christian's course, the Christian's duty, and the Christian's reward. When the competitors had determined to run, they enrolled their names in the public records.

Christians when baptized give up their names to be enrolled as candidates for the Christian course : they profess themselves determined to run the Christian race ; to fight, under the banners of their Saviour, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives end. This may be called a copy of the record. I fear some of us shall have cause to blush, if we are at the pains to compare our race, and our fight, with our profession. God grant that you may not be covered with confusion, when the Judge eternal shall sit to award the prize to the faithful !

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Those

Those who entered the lists with a view to obtain the prize, seriously strove for the mastery; "they were temperate in all things."

When the first Christians became acquainted with the importance of the heavenly prize, their inquiry was, What shall we do to obtain it? "Lay aside," said the apostle, "every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset you, and run the race that is set before you with meekness and fear." His argument is just and conclusive. If those disputants for the mere honour of obtaining a fading, temporary, corruptible mark of distinction, first submitted to a rigid course of discipline and bodily austerity; if to obtain the applause of their fellow-citizens they put every sinew upon the stretch to reach the goal; with what temperance, with what self-denial, with what determined exertion should the Christian address himself to the race set before him, when the prize held forth to his view is the crown of glory, which fadeth not away! "So run that you may obtain."

He that ran in the Olympic games was obliged to run according to the rules and laws established: the Christian who runs with a prospect

prospect of success, must also regulate himself according to the rules and laws prescribed in the gospel.

In order to compel such as ran to keep within the appointed limits, the course was often bounded by a river on the one side, and on the other with military pikes; so that the space allotted for the race was narrow, and on both sides bounded with danger and with death.

Our blessed Saviour describes the Christian course as distinguishable by similar circumstances; " Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life." Errors in faith, and licentiousness in practice, are on each side the Christian; and either of them is sufficient to obstruct his course, to turn him aside, and to deprive him of the heavenly prize.

The rules by which those who ran were to be guided, were given by the umpire or judge appointed to award the prize.

The gospel, the rule of Christian faith and of Christian practice, is given us by Jesus
O 2 Christ,

Christ, who is the appointed judge of the quick and dead.

The Christian's race differs from the Corinthian, in that he has many enemies to oppose his progress; the world, the flesh, and the devil: these will labour to divert, to retard, and will finally defeat his enterprize, if he run not cautiously. But he has advantages; the Judge is his friend; he is ready to assist him, to give energy to his endeavours, and success to his efforts: "Without me," said our Saviour, "ye can do nothing." St. Paul triumphed, however, in the fact, that he could do all things through Christ's strengthening him.

The Corinthian racers were animated by the vast concourse of spectators assembled to behold their exertions; "We," says the apostle, "are made a spectacle to angels and to men."

When the line of our duty exposes us to difficulty; when our firm adherence to the gospel subjects us to any temporary inconvenience or acts of self-denial; let us remember that the Master we serve has his eye upon us;
good

good angels watch over us continually to render us service, and bad ones to do us mischief; good men as our companions triumph in our perseverance, bad ones rejoice in our weakness, and will exult if by any means they can turn our feet from the paths of righteousness: these considerations should inspire us with ardour to press forward. "Who shall harm you," asks St. Paul, "if ye be followers of that which is good?" Let not despondency, or fear, or distrust, interrupt your humble affiance in the protection and aid of your Judge; but let an unshaken faith give fervour to your devotion, and the glorious prize set before you inspire you with resolution to endure unto the end.

The racers accustomed themselves to exercise in cumbrous clothing, and under the pressure of heavy weights, so that when they came to the race they might, by throwing every incumbrance aside, find themselves light, agile, and on the wing to reach the goal.

If we examine the 7th chapter to the Romans, we shall find that the Christian is not without his incumbrances. "I know," says the

apostle, "that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good," how to address myself to the Christian race, "I find not; for when I would do good, evil is present with me. I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Here is the source of the Christian's hope, and of his joy: however oppressed with guilt, however our consciences may accuse us with imperfection, yet we have this confidence, that in Jesus there is rest, in his atonement there is pardon, in his power there is deliverance. Looking up to the cross, we see in him a full expiation of sin; beholding his resurrection, we may rejoice in our complete justification: all the attributes of God are here viewed as receiving the fullest honour, and deriving the utmost satisfaction from his suffering Son. Giving full credit to the record God has given of this wondrous ministry of reconciliation, the Christian, like the disencumbered racer, presses forward, agile and lively, towards the
mark,

mark, for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Though at Corinth numbers started for the public applause, and for the verdant crown, yet but one received the prize.

Those who run the Christian race have here the advantage; they all run, and perseverance shall crown them all. "The Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me," says St. Paul, "the crown of glory; and not to me only, but to all who love his appearing: so run that ye may obtain."

At the Olympic game a register was kept of each who won the prize. Their success was honourable to their families; their names were held out to others, that they might emulate their exertions, and succeed to the like rewards.

We are told, that those who succeed in the Christian race have their names written in heaven: they are enrolled in the records of eternity; and this enrolment will be the earnest of the future inheritance of the saints in light. "Grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

The unsuccessful in the Corinthian race suffered no very considerable loss; some present mortification and disappointment was all: they might enter the lists at a future period, and carry off the prize. The circumstances of the professed candidates for the crown immortal in this respect vary: if they do not succeed in the appointed time, and during the day of salvation, they are undone; they not only lose the heavenly prize, but expose themselves to unutterable woe. This, Christians, ought to excite you to activity, to every possible exertion, so to run that ye may obtain. The apostle placed before the Corinthians his own example to excite their emulation: what he instructed them to do, he himself practised. I have exhorted you to run, and, says he, "I run, not as uncertainly;" I am not in the situation of the many, who must necessarily fall short of the goal, where only one can receive the prize. "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air;" not like the practising gladiators, who accustom themselves to various evolutions preparatory to the day of combat, who flourish their weapons in the air, engaging an imaginary enemy. My warfare is begun! Like the racer who is temperate in all things, and strives for the mastery, "I keep my body under, and
bring

bring it into subjection; lest that by any means," lest by copying the corrupt fashions, pursuing the sinful pleasures, or indulging the vicious habits of the world, lest by any of these means, "after I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

Nor was this vain boasting of our apostle. In labours he was abundant; in stripes above measure; in hungering and thirsting, in watchings, often; in bonds and imprisonment. His zeal for the glory of God, and his love for the souls of men, carried him from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, fully preaching the gospel of Christ. Surely, then, he might with propriety say, "So I run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep my body under, lest, after I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

Having thus offered to your reflections some observations on the propriety of the apostle's allusion to a race, with a view to illustrate the Christian life, it only remains for me to suggest to your consciences the use to be made of it to yourselves.

Upon

Upon the success of your Christian race your immortal interests depend. You have entered the lists at your baptism; which baptism is defined to be the outward visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace! Have you considered this? It must immediately occur to you, that the outward sign or form in baptism can do you no good, unless you possess the thing signified, the inward and spiritual grace. You have, perhaps, hitherto lived unanxious about this unction from above; although our church further insists upon it, that it is by this divine influence alone that, from the children of wrath, you are or can be made the children of grace. This is not a mere matter of speculation, a point of dispute, or of inconsiderable consequence; it is the ordination of God, that his grace should operate upon the heart, to convert and to capacitate the sinner to run the Christian race, to strengthen him every step, and to crown his exertions with success. "I am persuaded," says an apostle, "that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ."

It is with this operation that the Christian discipline begins. The apostle describes it as producing a contest for the mastery, and an exertion

exertion to keep the body under. It is not, however, in his intention to lead to a supposition, that this exertion will produce a total extinction of the being of sin, a perfect suppression of our passions, or an entire freedom from every propensity to evil:—No! it is this opposition that constitutes the Christian's warfare; that calls for all his firmness, that he may "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life;" that constitutes the Christian's race, which leads him to throw aside every weight, that he may press forward towards the mark, to the attainment of the heavenly prize.

You must, then, be convinced, that the Christian life is not a life of indolence, or spent in the pursuit of such objects only as appear of high estimation with the world. It is a truth, and I may appeal to your observation for the confirmation of it, that the methods contrived to consume the short span of human life, the frivolous dissipated habits which are assumed as the fashionable standard in every circle and in every society, have no relation whatever to the Christian race; and, what of course follows, no pretension whatever to the Christian's

tian's reward. Are any of you thus indifferent to the crown of glory? Is it possible, when God invites you to the race, when he declares himself a spectator of your exertions, when he offers you that strength which will lead you to conquest—What shall I say?—Is your indifference possible, when Jesus Christ presents himself at the goal, inviting you to run, making, as the reward of your enterprize, a free tender of all his fullness of grace and glory? Is it possible, after all, that you should wipe his cross from your foreheads, renounce all your most sacred engagements, and surrender yourselves the voluntary slaves of those very enemies against whom ye declared eternal war?—Gracious God! stretch out thine arm; rescue the daring sinner from his destructive resolves; make him a monument of that grace for which he will not ask, and a partaker of that mercy of which he is so insensible!

Are you willing to run the race that is set before you? thank God who hath so disposed you. Look up to him, in the holy exercises of devotion, for assistance, that you may so run as to obtain. Conduct yourselves like Christians.
“ Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary, as
a roaring

a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." Never for a moment indulge an opinion that, because Jesus Christ is declared to be the Saviour of men, you have nothing to do. It is true, he hath purchased redemption; but you are called upon to run, that you may obtain the prize! He hath conquered sin; but you are commanded to fight, to resist even unto death, striving against it. He hath accomplished an everlasting righteousness, through which every faithful disciple shall be presented faultless before the throne of God; but it is also to be remembered, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

"So run, that you may obtain." "Redeem the time." Keep the end of your faith full in view. Your race, perhaps, may be nearly finished; the goal not far distant; the Judge may have taken up the wreath of conquest to place upon your brow; the heavenly choir may have attuned their harps to welcome you to their abode. Animated with the prospect of that glory which is yet to be revealed, let us press forward; let us, by every work of faith, and labour of love, be growing into a
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meetness for our inheritance with the saints in light: and may we finally receive from the lips of our Saviour and our Judge, that testimony of approbation, which shall fill our souls with peace and joy, perfect, pure, and everlasting.

S E R M O N XIII.

THE TREASURES OF EARTH NOT TO BE
COMPARED WITH THOSE OF HEAVEN.

MAT. vi. 19, 20.

*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,
where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where
thieves break through and steal; but lay up
for yourselves treasures in heaven, where nei-
ther moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where
thieves do not break through nor steal.*

THE character and the conduct of Je-
sus Christ on earth, render it extremely
plain, that his principal design in coming into
the world was to instruct and to save man-
kind. It follows, that the proper business of
a Christian is to receive his instructions, in
order that he may share in his salvation.

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Were we properly impressed with a sense of the dignity of our Redeemer, did we consider him in that point of view in which the scriptures place him, as "the true God!" as well as our Saviour, we surely should not hesitate in rendering him that obedience which his absolute authority over us enjoins.

It is declared by an Evangelist, that he knew what was in man. He was thoroughly acquainted with human nature: he could trace vice through all the mazes of the heart, and detect hypocrisy through every covering. Informed of our whole constitution, deciding with precision on all our pursuits, seeing through the whole circle of our enjoyments, and weighing in an equal balance all that is called good or great on earth, he has left us this absolute injunction, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." If we admit that he was wise, we should listen to him with attention: if we believe that he came to seek and to save us, we should bow to his authority with joy and gratitude.

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The fact upon which our Saviour grounds his dissuasion from laying up treasures for ourselves on earth is plain: moth and rust corrupt our treasures, or thieves break through and steal them. Our Lord, by a figure, here guards his disciples and followers against the love of this present world; against the admission of its riches or honours, or its pleasures, to the exclusion of the heavenly riches, lest they should thereby fall short of that kingdom, the excellencies of which he came to recommend to them. The sons of sensuality seek for hidden treasure in the indulgence of their appetites, in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures; but are not these deceptive and evanid? Do not the votaries of pleasure, when at the summit of enjoyment, secretly sigh for something more permanent and satisfying? Do they not recollect the promises of yesterday with all the poignancy of disappointment, and feel themselves obliged to draw upon to-morrow for that shadow of happiness which they are pursuing?—Or,

What can be said for the far greater proportion of those who bow the pliant knee at the shrine of honour, or who court the capricious breath of fame? They arrive, perhaps, at that point of eminence unto which their

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ambition

ambition has long aspired. But here a new region opens to their view: happiness is beheld as holding her seat a little higher; some object of envy still appears above them, which, like the concealed worm, attacks the root of their felicity, and corrupts their treasures.— Or,

Perhaps we covet riches. Their attainment is very uncertain; and the enjoyment of them, when obtained, still more so.

The man of business rises up early, and late takes rest, and eats the bread of carefulness. His thoughts are ever employed on the extension of his trade. He watches all opportunities for gain. He seizes every moment that appears fortunate. His heart is elated by his success. He keeps the main end of his labours full in view. He looks forward to an approaching period, when his circumstances shall give him an easy independence, or raise him to a state of affluence. His villa is fixed on. He anticipates with pleasure the scenes of rural retirement which await him. The circle of his friends is chosen, his arrangements made, and his plan of life adjusted. The time arrives, and he gives up the world:
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he flies to his retreat with the fondest expectation. He looks round for his friends who have sailed with him over the tempestuous sea of life, and whom he now wishes to repose with him in his peaceful haven; but, alas! they have made an earlier retreat to the grave—to that place from whence no traveller returns. A new race has started up who know him not; whose maxims in trade he disapproves; whose manners and whose levity are equally offensive. His advice and his experience are insufficient to correct their folly: his temper is soured; he becomes displeased with all around him, unhappy in himself, and tired of the world. In vain then has he laid up treasures upon earth, where the moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.—
Or,

Perhaps our families are our treasures; we are surrounded with domestic endearments; we are beyond measure happy in seeing our comforts multiply, children like olive branches crowd our tables: we observe with pleasure the dawnings of their reason; we listen with delight to hear their first attempts to communicate their infant wants; we mark their

growth to maturity with unspeakable satisfaction : And have these treasures no moth ? does no rust corrupt, do no thieves break through nor steal ? How often are the feelings of the parental bosom torn by the ingratitude, by the want of duty and affection, in the children whom it has reared with tenderness and love !

How often have the grey hairs descended with sorrow to the grave, in the sad prospect of a favourite child declining from the paths of virtue, to vice, to infamy, and to ruin ! Or, perhaps, whilst they have been repaying our sollicitude for their happiness with every return of filial piety, disease has attacked these our treasures, death has broken through and stolen them from our arms. In these seasons of severe trial, what but the consolations of religion can afford us support ! The gospel persuades, that these treasures, which we had been laying up on earth with too much anxiety, are now laid up for us in heaven.—Or,

Our treasures have consisted in our friendships, in social intercourse, in a mutual communication of benefits and pleasures. The longest life is most acquainted with the moth
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that has eaten in upon these friendships, and the rust that has corrupted them. Sooner or later they are interrupted, they are broken : our friends are taken from our bosoms ; the indulgent parent, or the tender wife, or the affectionate husband, are seen languishing on the bed of sickness, and struggling amidst the pangs of dissolution ; they are followed to the grave with an ardent prayer, that these our treasures may be found in heaven.

Such is the common lot of man ! Our pleasures are upon the wing ; our enjoyments transient ; all we do, and all we know, are hastening to an end : the pity we have felt for others we shall need ; the tear of friendship which we have shed will fall from the friendly eye over our lifeless bodies. How unspeakably wise shall we have been in our passage through this variable, afflictive, and trying scene, to have laid up our treasures in heaven, “ where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

Our blessed Redeemer, who knew the true point of human happiness, gave the advice of

my text : to follow it will be to advance our interests now, and effectually secure our future felicity. To lay up treasure in heaven is to live like Christians ; to have all our desires and all our pursuits subordinate to the great objects of eternity ; to have the most humble views of our dependent state, holding all our blessings as a communication of the divine goodness, and cultivating a constant sense of our obligations to the supporting providence, protecting power, and abundant grace of God.

“ This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” All the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge centre here ; and from hence it is that we must all receive. The Father hath caused all fulness to dwell in the Son ; he is ordained to be the fountain of grace, and of life, and of salvation : if we are interested in this Saviour, all our treasures are in heaven ; they are laid up for us there. “ Ye are dead,” says the apostle, “ but your life is hid with Christ in God.”

How great this treasure is we cannot at present tell ; we cannot describe its extent, nor
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can we conceive the eternity of its duration. Our Lord has, however, condescended to inform us in what it differs from the treasures of the earth : no moth can eat in upon it, no rust corrupt, no thieves break through nor steal.

Sin has been the cause of all the disappointments we meet with here, of all our sicknesses and sorrows, and was the first cause of death. But there shall be no sin: the very being of sin shall be destroyed. Every one who lives now in the love and practice of sin, shall be excluded from the blissful society above.

There we shall be restored to those we loved on earth, who, with ourselves, made Jesus Christ their friend, who served and honoured him on earth, who copied after his example, walking as he also walked, " holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

" There shall be no more death," no more painful separations : our friendships, our joys, shall be pure and immortal ; " we shall see God as he is, and be like him for evermore."

Were the things above, satisfying and eternal as they are, more frequently the subject of our contemplation, they would moderate our attachments to the things on earth; they would reconcile us to the most afflicting occurrences, and enkindle in our breasts an ardent desire to enjoy them: we should then give full admission to the advice of our Lord, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through nor steal."

From the words we have been considering, so generally interesting and so truly important, it is natural for us to turn our reflections upon ourselves; to ask each one his own heart, Where is my treasure? "Where your treasure is," said our Saviour, "there your heart will be also."

It must indeed be admitted, that the body has many wants, many real, perhaps more imaginary: the affections have many natural attachments, many innocent, too many criminal.

It certainly was not in the intention of
Jesus

Jesus Christ to render men totally indifferent to their temporal concerns, to discourage the pursuits of industry, or to prevent the attainment of that competency necessary for the support of themselves and families—"Your heavenly father," said he, "knoweth that ye have need of these things." His design was to have every earthly good, every present acquisition and enjoyment, impressed only with its real value; and, by the frequent and serious consideration of their small importance and short duration, to excite our desires to obtain, and our endeavours to secure, that bread which endureth unto everlasting life. The holy art which the Christian has to study, is to keep subordinate to the supreme good those affections which are in themselves innocent. We should fear to let our hearts fix too intently on earthly objects, knowing how unsatisfying they are in their nature, and short in their duration. We are exhorted to use this world as not abusing it, and to "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth,"

If, contrary to the command of Jesus Christ, you are satisfied with those treasures
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which you have been laying up on earth, or if you are still pursuing them as your chief good, unconcerned about the heavenly treasure, you ought to consider that the things which you are coveting must soon leave you. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." If your hearts have been wholly engrossed with earthly things, painful indeed will that moment be which separates you from your treasure. The soul, concerning which no care has been taken, must tremble in its approaches to the throne of that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: immersed in all its guilt and pollution, unwashed in the blood of Jesus Christ, how dreadful must its interview be with the great Judge of all! Can you look forward to such a situation, and not be anxious to lay up your treasure in heaven? "Seek ye the Lord whilst he may be found, call upon him whilst he is near:"—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." This endeavour to obtain the heavenly prize does not require a sacrifice of all your temporal interests. The religion of the gospel lays no restraints upon us, but such as every truly wise man would lay
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lay upon himself. If it forbids licentiousness, if it prohibits profaneness, if it condemns impiety, if it discountenances fraud, cruelty, and injustice, such prohibitions are sanctioned by the voice of reason; they are indispensable for the safety of individuals, and the well-being of society: for it is easy to discern, that where the vices of the profligate and worthless have a general ascendancy, there mutual confidence must be lost, and mutual happiness be destroyed.

If then to the voice of reason, and the immediate interests of mankind, we superadd the motives of eternal death to every evil-doer, and of endless life and glory to them that do well, how chearfully should we give up every unlawful pursuit, every sin that doth most easily beset us, in order to escape the evil to come, and to secure the future glorious recompence of reward!

All the treasures of heaven are freely offered, are freely held out, to such as repent and believe the gospel. They are all secured, as the reward of the Redeemer's merit, of his cross and passion, his death and resurrection.

furrection. To such as seek for glory and immortality, he promises eternal life. "Seek ye then, that ye may find; knock, and the door shall be opened unto you." May ye fight the good fight of faith; resist unto death, striving against sin; and finally obtain from God, the Judge of all, that crown of righteousness which fadeth not away.

S E R M O N X I V .

THE SEVERITY OF THE LAW COMPARED
WITH THE GRACE OF THE GOSPEL.

JOHN, i. 17.

The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

WE find ourselves in a state of existence, and endued with such faculties and powers as demonstrate that we are the workmanship of some infinitely wise and glorious being.

The reason we possess further tells us the propriety of our rendering homage to this great Lord of all, who, as he had power to create, so he must have power to destroy.

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We feel, however, in ourselves, a reluctance to render him this homage ; we feel within us an opposition to his perfections and his authority.

We cannot but observe therefore, the most striking contradiction between the dictates of the understanding, and the dispositions of the heart. Natural religion teaches us thus much. The heathens saw it clearly : they lamented the depravity of their nature, the obstinacy of their passions, and that perversion of the will which subjected the intellectual to their corporeal nature. By their observation, and in their experience, they have united to confirm this serious truth, that “ all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

It is by the law, either of conscience or revelation, that the knowledge of sin is obtained. When God had separated the Jews from all the nations of the earth, he gave them the law by Moses ; he gave it, with all the majesty of a supreme Lawgiver, amidst the lightning, and thundering, and earthquakes of Sinai. Impressed with these awful tokens of the divine presence, the people implored Moses
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to intercede with God that they might not be repeated.

The law of the **T**wo **T**ables, given on the Mount, and thus consecrated with the glory of God, was the moral law; and is of perpetual obligation to all, wheresoever it is made known. St. Paul assures us, that its curses extend to both “Jews and Gentiles who continue not in all things written in the book of the law.”

It has been supposed, with probability, that the law of Sinai was a repetition of the law of Paradise, which was given by the Creator to man in his state of innocence and perfection. It is such a law as the perfections of God required him to give to his creatures, notwithstanding a subsequent state of guilt, weakness, and imperfection.

The depraved and lapsed state of man has taken nothing from the rights of the divine Lawgiver. He commands the obedience of his creatures: he enjoins a perfect obedience; an obedience constant and invariable: “He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all.”

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The law of God cannot be accommodated to human infirmity; nor could such an accommodation consist well with an upright administration of a system of human laws. It is especially in the nature of the law of God to be deaf to the plea of frailty; it knows no pity; it shews no mercy: it awards recompence to the innocent, it denounces punishment upon the guilty; it can do no other. We exist under this law, and are all considered as breakers of this law, and we are subject to all the pains and penalties of it. The first breach of it subjected the whole human race to death: the nature we inherit from the first offender hath placed us, without a single exception, under the power of death.

The sentence of the law goes further; it sentences the soul to a second death, a death eternal: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Thus sacred in its functions, thus severe in its penalties, thus rigid in its exactions, is that law which was given by Moses. In its cognizance it extends not only to the outward act, but to the inward frame and disposition of the mind; in its punishments it extends not only to the body, but to the soul; not only
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at the present, but for ever: this is the scripture doctrine. To what purpose then was this law given? "Wherefore then," the apostle asks, "serveth the law? It was added," says he, "because of transgression, till the seed should come unto whom the promise was made."

It was given first to impress the minds of men with the most awful thoughts of the purity, and holiness of God; of his absolute dominion over us, and what he has a right to expect from us: it was given that comparing ourselves with this transcript of the divine Mind, we might see our humiliated condition, and have our minds fitted for the reception of the mercy and goodness of God, in whatsoever way he shall think fit to communicate them.

When convinced that by the deeds of the law no man can be justified; when convinced that we are all concluded under sin, and exposed to the sentence of condemnation; we shall find it our interest to pursue further the discovery of revelation, in order that the mind be satisfied that it is possible that this sen-

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tence may be reversed, and a reconciliation effected between offending man and his offended Maker.

To cherish this pursuit, and to lead forward to this inquiry, the ceremonial law was also given; it was given by Moses. Here, as in a glass, were to be traced the purposes of Almighty love, and the secret counsels of his grace. The apostle pursues this subject, in the epistle to the Hebrews, with the most minute investigation, and insists that the entire system of Mosaic institutes was the shadow of a more perfect œconomy, which, at a distant period, was to receive its completion, and, in the person of Jesus Christ, to be fully substantiated.

He particularly informs us, that “when Moses had spoken every precept to the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, mingled with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined you. Moreover, he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry: and almost all things are by
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the law purged with blood ; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of the things in the heavens should be purified with these ; but the heavenly things themselves with better things than these." If you will take the trouble to read attentively this epistle, you will be convinced that the ceremonial law, which appears dark, mysterious, and unprofitable, was really instituted to keep up the faith and hope of God's ancient people in the promised Messiah, who was ordained to appear in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. They looked forward with hope to that blessed period, when the moral law, which exacted a sinless obedience, should receive that obedience in the character of the Son of God ; " when mercy and truth should meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other ;" when the ceremonial law, the representative of the mysterious process of redemption, should necessarily cease, and the whole assemblage of legal institutions be done away by the coming of Jesus Christ : " For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

If you reflect for a moment upon what has been advanced, you will discover the reason of that opposition between the law of Moses, and the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. The moral law was not founded in grace; it had not a particle of grace in its composition. I have already observed, that it was severe in its exaction, unrelenting in its awards; rigid in its punishments: its language was—Do this, do all constantly, perfectly, without the least deviation of the mind, without the smallest error in the practice, and you shall live; offend in one point, and you are guilty of all, and shall die.—The apostle might well call this law the ministration of death, the letter which killeth: it could do nothing else; it was the ministration of condemnation, and not of grace.

The ceremonial law was only the shadow of good things, the figure of heavenly things, and not the reality; but grace and truth, grace and substance, came by Jesus Christ. The advent of the Son of God made way for the introduction of abundant grace: possessing a pure and holy nature, without the smallest taint of sin, he was qualified, as the second Adam,

Adam, to fulfil the law of God in every point, and by that fulfilment, as the great head and representative of his people, to remove the curse from them, and to replace them in the eye of infinite purity, free from every pollution, and entitled, by virtue of his merits, to all, and unspeakably-greater blessings than those promised to our first father Adam. Hence St. Paul observes, "The law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death; for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh," hath abundantly effected: "therefore," he adds, "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

It appears then, that, by the coming of Jesus Christ, that mystery of grace which was hid from ages, and generations, was made manifest; the boundless love of Jehovah to his creatures of the human race was unfolded; the covenant of mercy, entered into by the sacred Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, was declared; and all the attributes of the Lord

God Almighty are now represented as concurring to restore the guilty race of man to their primitive state of holiness and happiness.

Consider the dignity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and say, whether that was not grace which led him to veil the glories of the Godhead in humanity? to pass through this world in that studied course of humility and self-denial which his history points out to us? "He humbled himself," says an apostle, "and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!"

If St. John, at the baptism of the great Redeemer of men, could say, "we beheld his glory, as of the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," how must that grace, that love, that compassion, have arisen in his estimation, when he saw him enduring the pains of crucifixion; when he heard him crying, as he bled, "I thirst;" when he heard him pleading as he died, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!" How glorious must the grace of Jesus Christ have appeared in the eyes of that condemned malefactor, who, in the moment of his

his crucifixion, was assured of his interest in the salvation of God, and that in Paradise he should on that day appear to grace the triumphs of his Saviour! Equally glorious will that grace appear to all who, convinced of their being under sentence of condemnation of the law of God, turn from this ministration of death to the life and liberty of the gospel.

That grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, is further evident by the superior blessings, and more full discoveries of the great objects of religion, which result from the ministry of the Son of God.

After his resurrection, he agreeably to his promise, sent down his holy Spirit to guide the minds of his disciples in the way of truth; to carry conviction home to the hearts and consciences of men; to lead them from sin, and from the paths of the destroyer, to the practice of holiness, to the paths of righteousness, and to the kingdom of God.

“Great grace,” says the author of the Acts of the Apostles, “was upon them all.” That grace, as from a fountain-head, proceeded forth from Jesus Christ, and from him it shall flow

until the great assembly of the church of the first-born be compleated, and the top stone of God's spiritual building be brought forth, with shoutings of "Grace, grace!" unto it.

The sons of infidelity oppose this revelation from God. Equally regardless of Moses and of Jesus Christ, they choose their own creed, and form the plan of their own conduct: they assume to themselves self-government, and ask, "Who is the Lord, that he should reign over us?" They throw off every restraint, they despise every religious duty, and affirm that the whole of religion is the contrivance of crafty and designing men. These are the most miserable part of our species; they are objects of our tenderest commiseration; they claim our pity and our prayers: "Light is come into the world, and they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Did they but admit the existence of God, they would surely admit the reasonableness, and excellence of his law: conscious of their own sinfulness and imperfection, they would embrace with gratitude the grace of his gospel. And can the existence of God be doubtful unto them? Do not the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament

mament shew his handy work? Do not the revolving seasons proclaim his bounty, and each returning day attest his goodness? Is there an organ of sense, is there a faculty of the mind, is there a single article in that vast combination of all that is wonderful in the human frame, but which must unite to condemn their insensibility, to reproach their impiety, and to proclaim their ingratitude?

Do they ask, "who is the Lord?" He is the former of the universe! It is he who created them! who created angels, and who cast the offending from his presence for evermore! And yet it is he who gave up his only Son, that ungrateful man might not become the associate of condemned angels in eternal woe. He is the God who proposes to them that mercy which they contemptuously reject; the author of that system of unexampled goodness which they despise; but whose patience thus wearied, whose grace thus neglected, whose majesty thus insulted, shall arise to shake terribly the earth: who hereafter shall ascend his great white throne, and convene all the nations of the earth before him; from whose presence shall issue a consuming fire to
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burn up his enemies ; the terror of whose countenance shall fill heaven with awe, and hell with amazement ; who shall say to the wicked placed on his left hand, “ Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Gracious God ! let thy mercy interpose ; awaken these deluded men to see thy law as the ministration of death to the unrighteous, and endue them with thy heavenly power to fly for refuge to thy gospel, that they may escape thy displeasure, and share in thy salvation !

We meet with others, who insensible to the general depravity of human nature, are with the Pharisee thanking God that they are not as other men : satisfied with exterior duties, they appear entirely careless about the renovation of the heart ; holding their own works in the highest estimation, they are indifferent about the work and grace of Christ.

It ought however to be considered, that it is our union with Jesus Christ, as the head of his church, which alone can stamp a value upon

upon human actions, or render them acceptable to God. Our Saviour's doctrine on this head is decided. "When ye have done all things whatsoever is commanded you, say we are unprofitable servants." "All our doings," says our church, "without thee, are nothing worth." The most zealous and successful efforts of piety are to be ascribed to his grace. Whatever we receive, whatever we hope for, we receive and hope for as the free gift of God in Jesus Christ. To form our minds to humility, the state in which our blessed Lord found the whole human race ought to be the frequent subject of our contemplation. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

It is under this character alone that we become entitled to share in his favour, or to partake of his redemption. It ought not to be thought to bear hard upon the importance of man, that he is insufficient of himself to do any thing as of himself, but that all his sufficiency is of God. Human depravity rendered the interposition of mercy necessary; and it ought to satisfy us, that the mercy of God

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will

will be effectual for all who seek it. The important truth of the gospel is, that "Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him." May you, my brethren, not only possess discernment to distinguish the true intention of the law given by Moses, but have your hearts formed for the reception of that grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ: then will you join with devout exultation, in the language of St. Paul, and say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: he hath justified us freely from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses;" and through him every believer, sincere, humble, and obedient, shall be presented faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy. It is incumbent upon you, then, Christians, to "shew forth his praise, not only with your lips, but in your lives, by giving up yourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all your days."

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XV.

CHRISTMAS-DAY.

CHARACTER OF CHRIST, AND THE
BLESSINGS OF HIS GOSPEL.

ISAIAH, xxv. 9.

With general Observations upon the Chapter.

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.

INSPIRED with the view of the Messiah's coming, the prophet begins this chapter with devout exclamation: "O Lord, thou art my God!" Happy they who can appropriate the same language, who can look up to heaven with an humble trust, and say, "O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will

will praise thy name: for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth!"

When this prophecy was penned, the plan of human redemption was not new in the eternal Mind. All events, past, present, and to come, were from everlasting known to God. The design of man's salvation co-existed with the foreseen fall of Adam. Isaiah looked back, and saw it as the effect of the wisest counsel; forward, and beheld it in its execution faithfulness and truth: but in the contemplation of this mysterious subject, he saw, by the prophetic spirit, the desolation of Salem's highly favoured city: "a city to be made an heap; a defenced city, a ruin; a palace of strangers, to be no city; never more to be built."

Jerusalem, the glory of the earth, where God was known in the midst of her, where the tribes went up to worship, where strangers and proselytes adored the God of Israel; this city the prophet foresaw, and here describes, as desolate, destroyed, and sentenced to be built no more!

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It is remarkable, after the final destruction of Jerusalem, that in the rebuilding the city, which is now called by that name, its form and situation were changed: Mount Calvary, which at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion was at some distance from the walls, is at present in the centre of the new town; the city having gradually embraced that sacred spot where the Son of God died, that he might with the arms of his mercy embrace a lost world.

The prophet predicts, that the palace should never be built. It is probable that Isaiah had in his view the magnificent temple which Solomon raised in honour of the great Jehovah. If this was the case, no event could more exactly correspond with what was foretold. When the city was taken, Titus, the Roman general, endeavoured to save the temple of God from the common ruin: but it was in vain; the infatuated Jews determined that the sacred edifice should perish with their devoted country. When, therefore, the Romans had made a successful breach, and stormed the city, numbers of the people ran towards the temple, set it on fire, and perished with it in the flames.

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It became a fixed opinion from that period, that the temple should never be rebuilt, especially among the Christians. This opinion was grounded on various prophecies, among which was that which I have read to you. History tells us, that Julian the apostate affected to treat this opinion with the utmost contempt, as the effect of superstitious prejudice; and directed that a number of workmen should set about rebuilding the temple upon the very spot where the former stood; but that in the attempt they were discouraged, from many supernatural occurrences, among which was that of fire issuing from the foundation; and, notwithstanding the most pressing injunctions of the emperor, they were unable to proceed. Without insisting at all upon the certainty of this relation, one fact is open to the consideration of the world—the temple at Jerusalem has never, from the period of its destruction, been rebuilt.

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The prophet goes on:—"Therefore the strong people shall glorify thee; the city of the terrible nation (or the city terrible to the nations) shall fear thee." The destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion both of the Jews
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and Christians, made way for the extension of the gospel of Christ. Rome herself, the city terrible to the nations, received the glad tidings of salvation, and, in the person of Constantine, bore testimony to the triumphs of the Son of God.

Isaiah foreseeing the numberless blessings which should flow down upon the guilty and depraved sons of men through the promised Messiah, says, "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." Or this verse may perhaps apply to that particular deliverance which was afforded to the Christians during the siege of Jerusalem. Before its final destruction, the providence of God so ordered it, that the Roman army was drawn off, and an opportunity given, to those who were so inclined, to fly. The Christians embraced the favourable interval, and escaped to a small village called Pella, but a short distance from the city. The general immediately returned to the assault, and quitted his station no more until the city was taken, and

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all

all the inhabitants enslaved, or put to the sword.

You may observe, the prophet, following the designs of the providence of God still further, "Thou," says he, "shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low."

Rome not only the conqueror of Jerusalem, but the mistress of the world, was in her turn sacked and burnt by the Goths. This branch of the terrible ones, raised up of God as the scourge of his people, and for the purpose of extending the knowledge of his blessed Son, we now see brought low, known no longer upon earth but in the page of history. This remarkable vicissitude in the Roman affairs, corresponds very exactly with what God had declared by his prophet in another place, that he would make an end of the oppressors of his people, but he would not make an end of them. The Jews, though dispersed upon the face of the whole earth, yet continue a distinct people, whilst the Romans, by whom their city was destroyed, and their total dispersion

person effected, are swallowed up amongst the other inhabitants of Europe.

The prophet having thus glanced at the events which were to be connected with, or to succeed, the coming of Christ, goes on to proclaim, in the most animated language, the character and offices, and work, of this glorious person. "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." You will easily remember, that when Jesus Christ instructed the world, he compared the kingdom of God, or the gospel kingdom, to a feast which a certain king made for his son. It is called a feast, from its being a time of joy, a time in which the angels from above proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth good-will towards men." It is called a feast of fat things, on account of the rich provision made for sinful man; a feast of a spiritual nature, suited to satisfy the conscience and the soul, to introduce peace, pardon, and salvation there.

"He will destroy," says Isaiah, "in this
R 2 mountain,

mountain, the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." Very significant of the accomplishment of this prophecy was the circumstance of the veil of the temple being rent in twain at the hour of our blessed Lord's crucifixion.

The first revelation given of God to the Israelites, was in the ceremonies it instituted, in the sacrifices it ordained, in the offices it enjoined, dark and mysterious. A cloud rested upon the tabernacle of God, and it was with great difficulty that the closest observer could discern, through the veil, the representation of good things to come.

The heathen world was still more involved in the gloom of ignorance. Devoted to the idolatrous worship of false gods, they entirely neglected to render that homage which was due to the true God : a covering was indeed cast over all people, and a veil spread over all nations ; but the blessed Jesus removed this veil, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.

In the doctrines he taught he made known the will of God to man : he proclaimed the
love

love of his heavenly Father, and manifested his intentions of grace and mercy towards his creatures of the human race: he declared that he came into the world to seek, and to save that which was lost. What a glorious discovery of divine beneficence was this! Man, compared to a lost sheep, wandering from the heavenly fold, too weak, too ignorant to return to the care of its Shepherd, is not forgotten of him; he leaves the ninety-and-nine in the wilderness, and goes in search of the wanderer, and, when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders.

Thus it was that Jesus, our good Shepherd, came to seek and to save us, to restore our wandering feet unto the ways of peace and salvation: he descended from heaven to effectuate the terms of that gracious covenant, the stipulations of which were ratified by the everlasting God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The blessed Jesus, when the fulness of time was come, visited this earth, for the purpose of making known that mystery which was hid from ages and generations.

At his birth an angel from heaven pro-
R 3 claimed

claimed him as a Saviour, as that holy seed which should bruise the serpent's head: accordingly holy Simeon, when he beheld the infant Messiah, exclaimed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

The prophet goes on to speak of the wonderful things which the Messiah should perform. "He shall swallow up death in victory; the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." St. Paul, in his celebrated address to the Corinthians, to confirm their faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, refers to this text: "Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

You observe further, the correspondence and the consistency of the sacred volume. "The Lord God," says Isaiah, "shall wipe away the tears from off all faces." The true penitent, conscious of his guilt, is filled with
godly

godly sorrow : when he makes the solemn review of his life, he sees in how many things he has offended. The law gives strength to sin, shews its heinousness, its offensiveness to heaven, and its awful penalty: the soul, alarmed with the fearful apprehension of a judgment to come, is agitated with penitential grief, and the eyes overflow with tears. “ Whilſt I ſuffer thy terrors,” ſays the Pſalmiſt, “ I am diſtracted.” In a ſituation like this, what is ſo likely to give peace to the conſcience, what to calm the perturbed waves of guilt and fear, as a view of the Son of God coming down to promote peace on earth, and good-will towards men ? It is this evidence of the love of God that wipes away the falling tear ; that ſays to the ſtorm and tempeſt within, “ Peace, be ſtill ;” that has an immediate and powerful tendency to reſcue from the power of ſin, and to work deliverance from the fear of that puniſhment which is its due.

“ In that day,” ſays the prophet, “ it ſhall be ſaid, Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for him, and he will ſave us.”

Here lies the foundation of the penitent's
R 4 hope,

hope, and hence arise motives for the believer's perseverance. Our Redeemer is our God; equal to the Father as touching the Godhead; equal in power and in eternity: hence he is qualified to sustain the sins of his people. It is this that has put infinite value upon his state of humiliation, that gives full virtue to all the offices he sustains in the behalf of guilty man. In this point of view consider him to-day; associate in your minds the infant Saviour in union with your God. This is the Lord; we have waited for him, and we will rejoice in his salvation. Well might the prophet anticipate the joy of the whole earth, in the prospect of the descent of the Divinity to save a guilty world! Well might he with confidence assert, that he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; that on him was laid the iniquity of us all! In the work of human redemption he is described as travelling in the greatness of his strength; and in the accomplishment of that work he has proved himself mighty to save. St. Paul calls the incarnation of Christ the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. It is a manifestation replete with wonders: this glorious person, whom the prophet describes as our God, and as coming
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to save us, was destined, in that body which he assumed, to die the death of the cross. The prediction is striking: "He shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim." And thus was he exhibited on Mount Calvary. There he spread forth his hands in testimony that he would draw all nations unto him; that he would embrace a sinful world with the arms of mercy. There he was wounded for our transgressions; there he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

Let your faith fix then upon this glorious person, thus foretold in all that he was to do, and in all that he was to suffer. Let the blessed gospel of this Son of God have its full influence upon your hearts: let it branch forth in your practice, in the production of an holy life and conversation, in the exercise of all godliness and virtue. Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies. Lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset you. The wages of sin is death: if you live in sin, Christ shall profit you nothing. He was manifested that he might destroy the works of darkness; that ye might renounce the hidden works

works of darkness; that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Are ye conscious of your guilt? have your sins occasioned you to shed tears of penitential sorrow?—sorrow not as those without hope! Behold your Almighty Saviour descending from heaven to pardon and expiate your sins. You have heard, that through him God hath promised to wipe away tears from off all faces. “Come unto me,” said Jesus Christ, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” It is better to sorrow after a godly sort, than to have an hard and impenitent heart, impenetrable by the love, and unawed by the judgments of God.

Lift up your eyes to the hills from whence cometh your salvation. Let your penitence be henceforth evidenced by the fruits of an holy life, and firmly rely for safety upon the faithfulness of God, “who is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto him through Jesus Christ.”

“It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, and he will save us.” The present is the day
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day of grace. He now saves from the guilt and power, and he will finally save from the punishment, of sin; that will be the day in which God will consummate his salvation. "Hereafter," said Jesus Christ, "ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." This an apostle calls, emphatically, the day of God. It will be his day, when all the ignominy of the cross shall be done away; when the whole mystery of providence shall be developed; when the mystery of grace shall be unfolded, and present to an assembled world the enormity of the guilt of such as failed to profit either by the one or the other. It will also be the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, whom the King eternal shall then crown with his approbation, and unto whom the Judge of all shall say, "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world."

S E R M O N XVI.

THE DIGNITY AND HUMILITY OF
JESUS CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS, ii. 5, 6, 7.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

IT seems there were little bickerings amongst the Philippians, little jealousies, selfish competitions, entirely contrary to the genius of the gospel, and repugnant to that primitive plan of communion in all things, which the infant state of the church required.

St. Paul therefore begins the chapter with the most affectionate and tender address to them, entreating them by the consolations of Christ, by the comfort of love, by the bowels of mercies, that they would fulfil his joy; that they would render the grey hairs of their venerable pastor pleasurable, by being like minded, by being one in love, of one accord, of one mind: and, to give full weight, and the most sacred sanction to his entreaties, he brings to their remembrance that character which they professed to venerate, an exemplar which they professed to adore.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,”—a mind accommodated to the greatest possible condescension —“who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; and yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

My brethren, you understand the words I have now read to you. When you hear
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St. Paul affirm, that Jesus Christ was in the form of God, you immediately affix some idea to this phrase: although you cannot comprehend what God is, yet you easily understand that, whatever God is, Jesus Christ was in his form.

This is what is affirmed, and what you are invited to believe. And you observe further, that Jesus Christ was not only in the form of God, but he thought it no robbery to be equal with God.

We desire you, upon this subject, only to exercise plain common sense, without any logical refinements, without any metaphysical distinctions, or abstruse reasonings. It is perfectly easy for you to imagine from the apostle's language, that Jesus Christ was equal with God, and that the assumption of this equality he thought no robbery. This is the proposition which we would have you believe: this is what our church intended you should believe, when she appointed this epistle to be read on this day.

In the discussion of the subject before me, I
would

would wish you to keep this grand, this wonderful, this deeply interesting point in your view: it will open to your minds the depraved state of human nature; it will trace out for you the sad consequences of sin; it will exhibit human misery; it will present you with the ruin into which all were plunging, when the wisdom of God suggested, when the goodness of God proposed, when the power of God executed, a plan wonderful in every part, in its commencement, in its operation, in its final issue.

The man whom God created, pure, holy, in his own image, the representative of all his race, fell by an act of positive disobedience. The penalty was that man should die. Had he been a mere animal, whose existence would have terminated like the brute, the penalty would indeed have been terrible to a man and woman who had known what happiness really was: their sufferings, however, would have been short. But God had breathed into man a living soul; he had given him an immortal nature, a principle not to be destroyed; whose exquisite death consisted in a separation

ration from God, the source of its being and its bliss.

This was the calamity to be deplored ; this was the stroke to be deprecated ; this was the dread event which was to be apprehended, with every sense that terror could inspire.

Man fled from the presence of his God ; he was stripped of his glory ; his innocence was gone : he could no longer hear his Maker's voice with pleasure ; he was overwhelmed with guilt ; he was dismayed, he was miserable. In this guilt, and in this misery, he involved all his sons. God describes them as having all gone out of the way, as being altogether become abominable, none of them doing good, no not one. Here it is that we take up the gospel as the fulfilment of the first promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ;—the Son of man came to seek, and to save that which was lost."

Consider then the state of man. Must it

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not have been deplorably fallen, since it required the Son of God to descend from heaven to save him? Consider how the attributes of God must have been injured, and insulted, to require this glorious personage to make himself of no reputation! Your Saviour was in the form of God; equal with God; glorified with him before the world was; the object of the supreme worship of angels, upon whose tongues his glories were celebrated; before whose presence they prostrated themselves with the profoundest humiliation; at whose feet they laid their crowns; to whose praises they attuned their golden harps; whose commands they obeyed with transport. This sacred person, who was in the form of God, and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made himself—it was his own act to make himself, of no reputation; it was his own sovereign will that led him to this humiliation; without any influence, without any compulsion, but what arose from the riches of his own grace, from the misery of his creatures, and from his pity and compassion towards them.

He was infinitely exalted above all praise
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and all thanksgiving, yet he made himself of no reputation. To his mind, an elevation to the thrones and dominions of this world was of no consideration: he passed by them all, by becoming the son of Mary, an humble and obscure virgin, espoused to a man equally obscure; both depending upon their own industry to keep them from want. With these did the Son of God take up his abode: he reduced his excellent glory to this state of abasement and self-denial. Whatever is reputable in this world, greatness, elevation to rank, riches, dignities, popularity, he passed by them all, he renounced them all. He quitted the right hand of God, and chose a stable for his birth-place: he quitted the palace of the King of kings, and could not find accommodation, even in a poor contemptible inn—"Mary brought forth her first-born son, and laid him in a manger!"

Surely you are easily persuaded to follow the apostle in this assertion, that "he humbled himself." Can you conceive a greater contrast, than between the Son of the most high God in heaven, and the son of Mary in Bethlehem? Though the Lord of the universe

there, here he appears in the form of a servant: there, possessed with all power and glory; here, the weak and helpless infant.

Nor does this want of reputation, this degradation, confine itself to this his first state of human existence: still he pursued the same path of humility, of poverty, of self-abasement. Do you ask for the place of his residence? He had none.—“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” He chose no fixed residence. The seats of human misery lay too much scattered, the calamities of men too greatly varied, to admit of his having any settled habitation. The prophet Isaiah had described him in his office, as anointed to preach good tidings. “And I must go (said Jesus) and preach the gospel in the villages round about, for therefore am I come.” He was to “bind up the broken-hearted;” and where was the heart broken with sorrow, that Jesus did not bind up?—Did Mary and Martha lament a dead brother; did they go to the grave to weep there? Jesus went to the grave also: he wept with them; he bound up their broken hearts, whilst

whilst he unloosed the bands of death, and said, "Lazarus, come forth!"—Does the centurion lament his little favourite daughter now dead; does he solicit the attention of Jesus Christ; does he implore his aid? "Go thy way," said the sympathizing Saviour, "thy daughter liveth!"—Does a disconsolate and childless widow follow her only son to the grave? Jesus is there, to bind up her broken heart; "Young man, I say unto thee, arise:" at his command he that was dead arose, "and he delivered him to his mother!"—The time would fail me to enumerate the tears he wiped away, the sorrows he alleviated, the wounded spirits into which he poured the balm of consolation. His character is comprehended in this short testimony given by his followers—"He went about doing good."

Though he made himself of no reputation, by taking our nature, by assuming the form of a servant, yet the rays of the Godhead appeared through the shade. To the diseased he said, "Be whole," and they were whole! To the blind man, "Receive thy sight," and he saw! To the deaf, "Be opened," and the ears were unstopped! To the boisterous elements,

to the storm and tempest, to the tumultuous and raging sea, he said, "Peace, be still," and they owned his power; they were hushed into silence, there was a great calm! Well might the astonished and terrified disciples cry out, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the seas obey him?"

This was Jesus! who, though he had existed from everlasting in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation. He appeared in the lowest state of humiliation: he took upon himself all the innocent infirmities of our nature, and was in all points tempted like unto us.—This, all this, he willingly submitted to, that he might effect the great work of human redemption.

Whilst he took up his abode among men, he was engaged in the important business of making up the breach between offending man and his offended Maker. The law, which was violated by the first Adam, and which entailed the deadly forfeiture of every blessing, was restored to its full perfection by the obedience of Jesus Christ; he answered its most
extensive

extensive claims: its most rigid penalties he endured; and, by an entire submission to do and to suffer the whole will of God, he restored to guilty man, upon the foot of his merit alone, a right and title to a complete salvation. St. Paul saw this, and exclaimed, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And thus may every sincere penitent, and true believer, triumph in the salvation of God: he may with the royal Psalmist say, "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help." Though distressed beyond measure in the review of past transgressions; though the law condemn, the conscience accuse, and Satan tempt to despair; yet there is one equal with God, who is mighty to save; one who "cometh up from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosrah, red in his apparel like one who treadeth in the wine-press."—"Yea," says the Mediator, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me."—"Behold," says God, "I lay in Zion a corner-stone, a sure foundation."—Here, Christians, if ye are disposed to rest; here, if

you place your confidence, you can never fail. I might lead you this morning to that scene in which the promised mercy of Jehovah has been ratified. I might shew you this person who was equal with God, and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God. I might shew you him, after a life spent for the good of others, treated like a vile malefactor. I might dwell on the agony he endured in the garden; on that bitter cup prepared by his Father, the drinking of which caused the sweat as great drops of blood to fall to the ground. I might lead you with him from prison and judgment, until you behold him nailed to the cross—pierced and dying. I might shew you, I say, this ratification of God's mercy, written in the blood of Jesus Christ: but I forbear, as I should be anticipating a branch of my subject which will particularly call for our attention on the approaching season. It will, however, be proper for us in the interval, indeed it will be useful to us at all times, to contemplate the opposite features in the character of the Son of God. “He was rich; yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.”—“Oh, that men would
praise

praise the Lord for his goodness, and for the wonders which he doeth for the children of men!"

How truly wonderful it is, that any of the human race should be disinclined to praise the Lord for his goodness; that they should feel no disposition to consider what has been done for them in creation and redemption; who live the mere sensual life of the brute, without any regard to their immortal interests; who choose to run the hazard of eternal ruin, rather than embrace the everlasting gospel, and obey the precepts of the Son of God. Look forward to the great day, and behold the multitudes of those miserable men who loved darkness rather than light; who hated reproof; who spurned at the revelation of God; who rejected the blood of atonement; who chose to live in their sins, and who died in them:—Behold them starting from the bed of death, astonished, ghastly, terrified: behold them realizing the prophecy of St. John, calling to the rocks to fall on them, and the mountains to cover them. But no! the rocks sink, and the mountains disappear! the earth and the heavens flee away! Irresistibly impelled to a
new

new centre of attraction, the ungodly hasten, overwhelmed with horror and dismay, to where the great white throne is fixed; where the crimson banner is unfurled; where the great Judge of all is seated; where the impartial volumes are opened; where myriads of mighty angels brandish their flaming swords, ready to execute the just sentence to be pronounced upon all the workers of iniquity.—Gracious God!

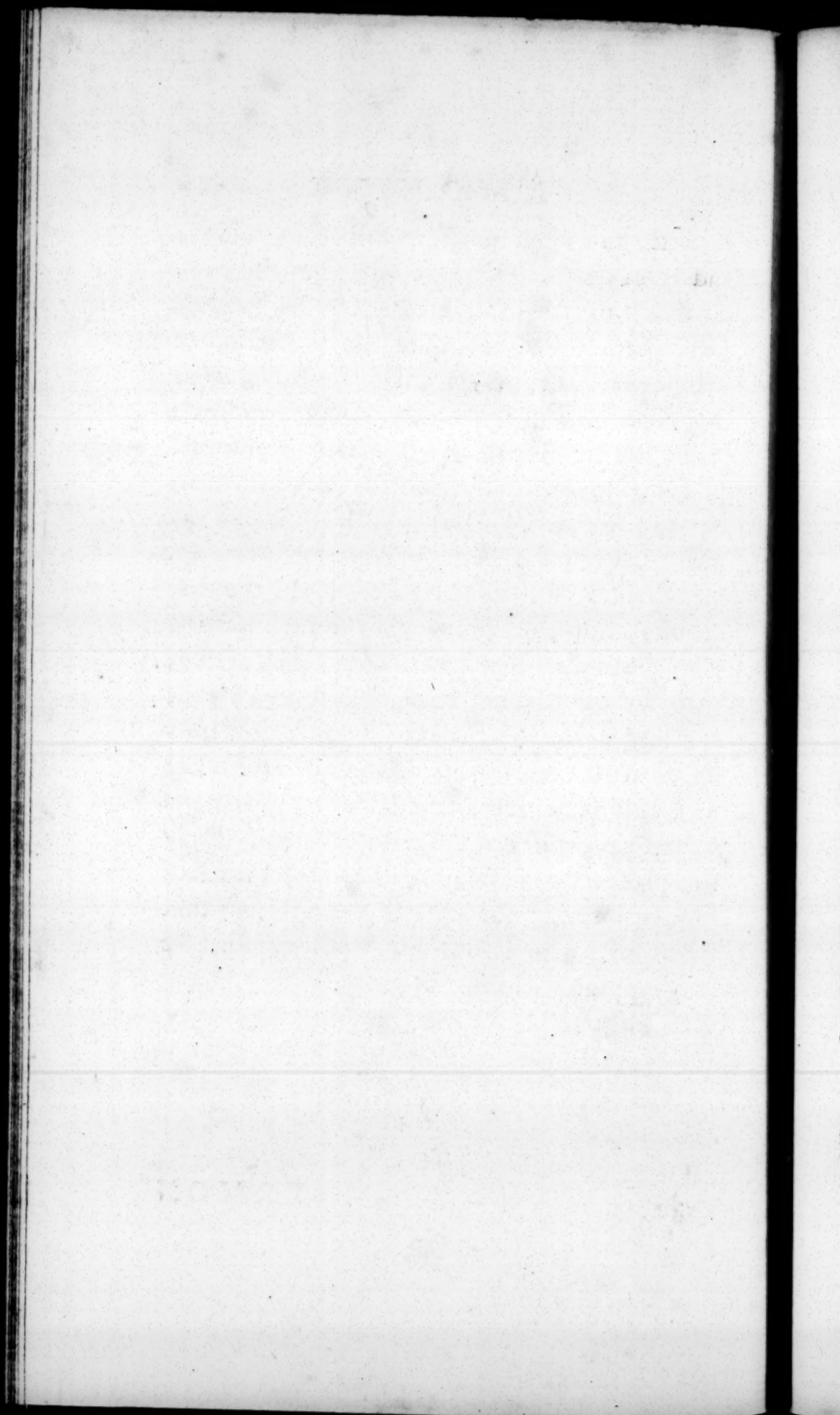
Let this scene, so awful, so certain, and so decisive, inspire us all with becoming seriousness. Let not this day of probation be spent in disobedience to thy laws, in defiance of thine authority, or in neglect of thy free offers of mercy and salvation. Give us all that godly sorrow for sin which worketh repentance unto life, and that humble confidence in the merits of thy Son which shall quiet our alarms, and hush our souls to peace!

My brethren! the study of the character of Jesus Christ will be a proper business for you in the ensuing week. In this study, you are to consider what he was from everlasting, and what, in the œconomy of redemption, he

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became,

became, to rescue us from sin, from misery, and from death. May we all, from the consideration of the exalted character he bears as God, place ourselves under the protection of his power. Let us, from his character as man, trust with confidence to his goodness. "He was in all points tempted like unto us, that he might know how to succour them that are tempted." But, above all, let us remember what he hath suffered for our sins. Let us view him upon the cross, in the last agonies of death; and may this scene inspire us with the most ardent love to this blessed person, with an utter abhorrence against every evil, and lead us to run the way of his commandments with chearfulness and constancy. Let us finally remember, that he is to appear the second time without sin unto salvation. May this prospect animate us so to conduct ourselves in our journey through this world, "that when he, who is our life, shall appear, we may appear with him in glory."



S E R M O N XVII*.

GOOD-FRIDAY.

I COR. i. 23.

We preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.

THE doctrine of our redemption by the cross of Christ, is a mystery peculiar to the gospel. The Jew and the Gentile foresaw, that to give countenance to this mystery would be productive of ruin to their respective systems, since it was easy to observe that it laid the axe at the root of human sagacity, and entirely superseded the Mosaic institutes. But

* The subject of the two following discourses will be found, treated with great judgment and elegance, in the French of M. Huet.

whence

whence was it that the doctrines of the gospel tended to explode the weakness of the human understanding, and the inutility of the Jewish ceremonies? It was hence:—Their introduction proved, that no former dispensation was sufficient to bring man into a state of reconciliation with God. The sacrifices ordained among the Jews, so far from being effectual to promote this reconciliation, were only intended to represent the true sacrifice, which once, in the end of the world, should be made to put away sin, and to reconcile sinners unto God. The constant language of the apostles is, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses, and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation.” They preached Christ crucified; but their doctrine was “to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness:” it was too humiliating to the pride of reason, to the positive decisions of philosophy, to the tradition of the elders, and to the pomp of pharisaic systems. Christianity, however, here sets its foot: it rests firmly upon this fundamental doctrine; it excludes all from the benefit of gospel salvation, but such as are ready to receive it as the purchase of his sacrifice,

fice, who is now exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour.

The doctrine of Christ crucified brings to the world the knowledge of life and immortality: it opens before us the glories of eternity. The desire of happiness is powerfully implanted in our nature: we aspire after a happiness more satisfying and permanent than is the lot of the present short span of human existence. Amidst this desire of happiness, we feel ourselves frail; our consciences accuse us of a depravity of heart, and of a want of integrity in our conduct, which by no means correspond with that purity of character which is alone estimable to God. A question naturally arises in our breasts, respecting the punishments of futurity. How are we to escape that misery which conscience anticipates, and which the Almighty threatens as the wages of sin?—The gospel alone is capable of drawing a sinner from this abyss. Jesus Christ has dispersed the gloom: by his death he has destroyed him who had the power of death; he hath made salvation possible, nay certain, to every penitent; he hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers; he hath promised to
come

come again and take them to himself, to restore them to new life, and to associate them for ever with himself in the fruition of the ever-blessed God. These are the objects which elevate the Christian's hope; which, like the perfect day, beam from the gospel upon his soul, and lift him far above the interests of mortality. Who then can obscure the hopes of the faithful and obedient? Who shall condemn, since Christ hath died? What shall now interrupt the current of the love of God to man, since he hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!

Fix your eyes, brethren, upon that cross where the blessed Jesus expires! expires, surrounded with all the horrors of deliberate torment! You see, nailed to the accursed tree, that beloved Son in whom God declared he was well pleased, and shedding his blood for you. It is by this blood that he has affixed his seal to the unalterable truth of the promises of future glory to be revealed in us. It was by this blood that he satisfied all the claims of justice upon us, and opened an access by one Spirit unto the Father. Jesus Christ has in his death rendered the throne of mercy accessible to every humble penitent:

penitent : he was made a mediator of that covenant of grace, in which God addressees this gracious language to every one who seeks his mercy and his favour, “ Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as wool ; and though red like crimson, they shall be white as snow.”

But let us not contaminate this source of comfort ; let us not draw consequences false and destructive from a doctrine holy, as well as full of consolation. Those who are the genuine objects of this condescension, and this love of God, who are entitled to draw pleasure from our re-tracing the lineaments of divine compassion, are so far from abusing this grace, that they frequently hesitate upon the borders of despair, and embrace it with a trembling heart.

It is not to the presumptuous and ungodly, that the word of this salvation is sent ; not to the false professor, who making Christ the minister of sin, figures to himself that the blood of expiation is a proclamation of licence and impunity to the daring sinner. To such the gospel extends none of its consolations ; to

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such

such it is heard only in the voice of threatening and of condemnation. But ye, who sincerely seek holiness as well as pardon, who sorrow to behold the slowness of your progress in the imitation of the character of Jesus Christ: ye timid consciences, who are alarmed with the remembrance of transgressions into which ye once fell; whose hearts are upright before God; who, repenting of the past, desire to honour him by the righteous habits of your future lives; lay your hearts open to the full influence of those consolations, which are presented to you from the cross of Christ.

He died for your sins, and he rose again for your justification. What offences, what forfeiture, can obstruct the intercourse of the loving kindness of God, who sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Were you tainted with Manasseh's crimes; were you, like Peter, guilty of having denied your Saviour, through the fear of those indignities and torments unto which you saw him exposed; were you, like Zaccheus, enriched with the exactions of unrighteousness and extortion; if you imitate their humility, if you embrace

embrace their penitence; if you copy their return to the paths of righteousness; you may prove with them that "God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent and live." This is now the Christian's privilege, and the ground of the penitent's hope, that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners!"

In the sufferings and in the death of Jesus Christ, we have marked out for us a complete course of conduct. One of the most divine characteristics of the Christian religion is, its assimilation of purity, and of condescension: whilst it stoops to all the weaknesses and infirmities of human nature, it lifts the subjects of its influence to the most exalted virtue. This feature, which projects itself to the eye of every enlightened beholder, shines with superior brilliancy in the mystery of the cross; this cross, which, as I have just observed, affords the most powerful antidote against de-

spair, yet enjoins to all who share its blessings a course of constant and exemplary duties.

It teaches the necessity of an exact, and submissive obedience to the will of God. Jesus Christ, when he died, preached the necessity of holiness with a voice still more powerful than that which was heard on the mount of Sinai: he was a lawgiver who sacrificed his own life to the severity of those laws which himself had instituted. This was the idea of the apostles; and it is obviously their intention to impress our hearts with this sublime example. When they describe to you how he acted, they offer to you a plan of action. When they shew you what the conduct of Jesus Christ was in such, and such circumstances of his passion, they trace that exact line of duty which is imposed upon his disciples in the hour of trial and of suffering.

Are we exposed to the unjust reproaches of malevolence, and calumny, which, as in the case of Jesus Christ, are directed against the most upright intentions, and the purest conduct? Let us, conscious how short we fall of the excellence

cellence of his character, learn from the patience and resignation of Jesus Christ to shew ourselves his members, by following in those steps which he hath marked out for us. When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him who is the equitable Judge of injured innocence. Do we feel ourselves tempted to revenge; have we been betrayed by the perfidious conduct of pretended friends; are we persecuted by the unrelenting malice of our enemies; are even the acts of our benevolence turned against us by the ingratitude of men? In the forgiveness of these it is, that our patience as Christians must be manifested. It is here, that whilst we mortify the pride of our hearts, the graces of the gospel will triumph. When our resentments are raised to the highest pitch, and our indignation might be justified by the maxims and the practice of the world, let us suspend the execution of our vengeance till we take one look at the gentleness of the suffering Jesus: surely then our wrath will die away. Those accents of compassion, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," will wrest every vindictive passion from our breasts, and establish a sweet

peace and serenity there. Great, indeed, and difficult, these duties are, not only in themselves, but from the various obstructions which oppose their influence in our depraved hearts.

The Christian, who sets his beloved Lord always before him, must, in the study of his character and conduct, subject himself to a course of self-denial. The doctrine of the cross, however, affords several motives which offer themselves to induce a chearful application to this course of obedience.

Do you want a shield to secure you against the seductions of the world, to render you invulnerable to the fiery darts of the adversary? Hear what prevailed with the illustrious St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It was this study that inspired him with eloquence to preach, with patience to suffer, with ardour to persevere even unto death, striving against sin. "He died for us," said this apostle, "that we should no longer live unto ourselves, but unto him." "If I be
lifted

lifted up," said our Lord, "I will draw all men unto me."—He does so, by the merit of his sufferings, by the strength of his love, and by the power of his example. It is from his cross that he endeavours to engage our hearts, to bind us to himself by motives of love, of interest, and of terror. When we bid you look to the bleeding Saviour upon the cross, we bid you look on the most stupendous instance of his love. It was his love alone that induced him to undertake the work of human redemption, and that straitened him until it was accomplished. What benefactor, then, can claim a title to our gratitude upon equal terms? What lawgiver ever effected a deliverance for his country, equal to the deliverance which the dying Jesus wrought for his enemies? After a consideration so affecting, "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be," says the apostle, "anathema, maranatha."

He invites you by motives of interest. That salvation unto which the Son of God hath led the way before us; that salvation, which is the perfection of all the great things he hath promised to those that love

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him;

him; that salvation is the inheritance of the saints in light: and it is for this that you are invited to prepare, for which you are exhorted to run, and which you are directed to work out with fear and trembling. Eternal life is prepared for those who, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith, persevere in well-doing. He hath told us, that "he who endureth unto the end shall be saved; and to him that overcometh," says he, "will I give to sit down with me on my throne, as I have overcome, and sat down with the Father on his throne."

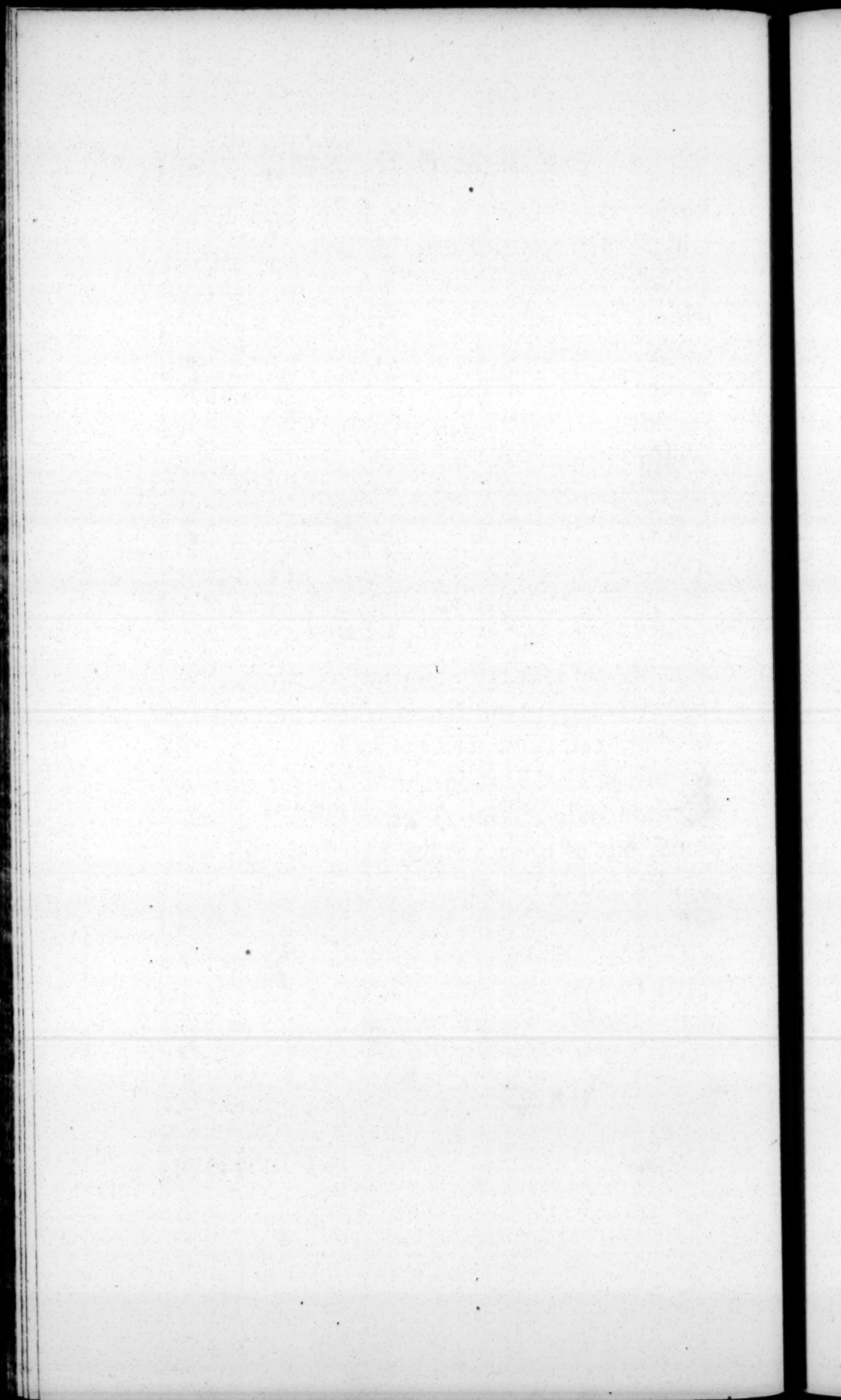
He invites you by motives of terror;—by those terrors which surrounded his cross in that dreadful hour, in which he cried with a loud voice, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. The heavens were darkened, the earth trembled, the graves were opened, whilst the blessed Jesus, by the sacrifice of himself, expiated the sins of the world. And what is the serious language of these convulsions of nature? Is it not similar to that of the apostle? "If they who despised Moses' law perished without remedy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall they be thought worthy

worthy who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing?" Such must themselves be the sacrifice to the just displeasure of their affronted Saviour. There only remains for them a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. But not such is to be your portion, Christians! faithful, humble, and obedient. No devouring fire, destined to consume the impenitent, no torments, appointed by the Almighty to punish his enemies, will be the lot of your inheritance; will be the reward of your attachment to the person, to the doctrines, to the example, of Jesus Christ. In his sufferings you behold your security; in his death, a full deliverance from wrath and condemnation. "Who now shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies; who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ that died!" But, whilst we contemplate this wonderful and glorious demonstration of the love of God to man, let the sufferings of our blessed Saviour, powerfully impress our minds with a sense of the malignancy of sin: it is on Calvary we learn its extreme offensiveness to God; and from thence we are taught,

taught, that Jesus Christ not only intended to bring us into a state of reconciliation, but to lead us into the paths of holiness: it is in this path alone that we can express our gratitude to him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. He hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps. St. Paul exhorts us to consider him, to study his character, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; who when he suffered threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously. Surely his character must be worthy of our wonder and our praise, whose life was marked with the most compassionate solicitude for the salvation of mankind, and who on the cross poured out at once his prayers, and his blood, for his enemies!

What equal tribute of love and adoration can we pay to this great Captain of our salvation, who for us so patiently endured the cross, and despised the shame? Reason, religion, gratitude, powerfully plead with us to “shew forth his praise, not only with our lips but in our lives;” to “present unto him our
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bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable." Thus, devoted to his honour, we may without trepidation look forward to that hour which shall close our commerce with the world. We may behold the advances of death without fear, and look into the grave undimmed. Our crucified Master has extracted the sting from the one, and hath gloriously triumphed over the other. Our eye of faith, passing beyond the dominions of death, and the grave, may direct itself with humble hope to that period, "when all the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Zion with songs in their mouths, and everlasting joy upon their heads:" where that great multitude which no man can number, cast their crowns in homage at the feet of the Lamb, saying, "Thou art worthy, for thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, out of every nation, and kingdom, and people, and tongue!"



S E R M O N XVIII.

J E S U S R I S E N.

I COR. XV. 20.

Now is Christ risen from the dead.

IT was natural that the history of the sufferings and death of our Lord, should leave upon our hearts some impressions of sorrow.

The apostles, though they had been witnesses of their Master's miracles, had scarcely an hope of his resurrection. The women who followed him to his cross, still drooping under the remembrance of his sufferings, sought what they supposed the only remaining consolation, that of shedding their tears upon his tomb. But Jesus proved when he died that
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he was God—all nature testified his divinity ! The sun was darkened, the rocks rent, the earth trembled, the graves were opened, and the dead awaited the signal of their Master's resurrection, that they might leave their gloomy abodes, and be the first-fruits of his triumph. Surely the reproach of Jesus Christ to his disciples was just ; “ O fools, and slow of heart, to believe all that Moses and the prophets have spoken ! ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ? ” The miracles and the promises of Jesus Christ, the prodigies attending his crucifixion, ought to have cherished their hopes that after the third day he should rise again. But the pungency of their sorrow, the confusion of their imagination, oppressed with grief, and, above all, the weakness of their heart, too much attached to present prosperity, rendered them insensible to the most obvious and encouraging considerations. The cross seemed to have dissolved all the ties which had united them to their blessed Master ; and the more they felt the weight of their loss, the more incredulous they were as to his resurrection. Thus it is, that in moments of distress we see all things through a false medium, a medium which

which magnifies our calamities, and puts our comforts at the greatest distance from us !

But when the mourning followers of Jesus least expected it, joy succeeded their sorrow. They who wept over the ignominy of the Saviour, shared also in the exultation arising from his victory. The Conqueror, who submitted unto death, became glorious in his resurrection : he came victorious from the tomb, and deprived the grave of its most illustrious captive. By this triumph he strewed through all the dominions of death the seeds of life and immortality !

The resurrection of Jesus is the most striking testimony to the Christian that he has not followed cunningly-devised fables. It is in this wonderful mystery, that all the transactions of our Saviour's life are proved to be the genuine exertions of the Son of God. The divinity which he claimed might with some have appeared questionable, if he had not finally appeared capable of re-animating those principles of life of which he declared himself the author. Had he failed here, his other miracles would have appeared the specious exertions

ertions of an impostor, who had deceived the senses, and played upon the credulity of the vulgar. If his power had sunk in death, that pure and heavenly doctrine, with which he has enlightened, and by which he saves mankind, would have been regarded as the production of an ingenious, but designing man; it would have failed in that sanction of infallibility which his divinity was to give it, and consequently would have wanted the most authentic testimony of the truth of his ministry.

This argument St. Paul urges here to the Corinthian converts: he insists upon it, that if Christ were not risen, that their faith was fiction, his preaching vain, and that they were dead in their sins. But, the doctrine of the resurrection of the Son of God established, then our religion appears founded on a rock: all the chastisements which the gospel threatens become inevitable, all its promises unfailing, all its mysteries are solved, if our faith admits this truth, this testimony, that Jesus Christ is risen.

It is plain, that the resurrection of the Son of God is the most powerful proof of his mission.

sion. The Jews asked him to shew them some sign from heaven; but he knew, from their dispositions, that miracles would be useless. He however told them that he would give them one:—"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it again." If miracles had been sufficient to have convinced their incredulity, miracles were not wanting. In the course of his ministry, Jesus was seen to walk in the midst of wonders: the elements were at his disposal, and all nature under his controul. He astonished the multitude by his mighty words, and mighty works. The eyes which had never beheld the light were opened; the tongue of the dumb uttered its benedictions on that power by which it had been loosed: at the command of Jesus, the paralytic man leaves his couch, and hastens to wipe away the tears of a desponding family. Death was no longer able to retain its prey: he said to Lazarus, "Come forth;" and his all-powerful voice re-animates the ashes of the tomb. And yet Jesus Christ did not rest on these miracles as a test of his divinity; on the contrary, he often strove to bury them in secrecy. He imposed silence on the sick which he healed, on the lame whom he made whole.

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He directed his disciples not to divulge the whole weight of evidence which they possessed in his favour, until he should arise from the dead. On this final testimony he rested all his previous miracles; and on this depended the full credit of his ministry, the foundation of his church, the hopes, the expectations, the salvation of his followers. Hence it is, that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ the truth and power of God are manifested in such a variety of features. The power by which the miracles were wrought might be communicated to a man; but the supreme power is proved in this instance to exist in Jesus Christ himself. It was the prerogative of the Son of God alone to loose the bands of death, and to return again to life. “I,” said he, “have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again.—Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it again.”

All the circumstances attending this event, combine to form a regular chain of evidence, and to force conviction on the candid mind. The disciples had given up their hopes; they despaired of a cause, which had involved its Author in misery and death: they had all taken
measures

measures for secreting themselves; and two of them were actually going off when Jesus met them on the road to Emaus.

The credit of the high priests, and the justice of their prosecution, were committed on the proof that Jesus Christ was an impostor. They therefore took all possible care, they adopted every precaution, to prevent his body being stolen, that this proof might be established. They sealed the sepulchre, and planted a Roman guard; against which were opposed about eight poor men, under the impression of fear, without arms or discipline.

Jesus Christ did not, however, need the aid of his disciples. He arose from the dead! The guards became as dead men; and at last ran from the awful spot with terror and amazement. They declared the circumstances as they happened, without disguise; but they were instantly bribed to retract their evidence, and to offer to the world a story as ridiculous as it was false. "Say," said the wary high priests, "that his disciples came by night, and stole him away whilst we slept."—They said

so, and some believed it; but they were such only as wished it had been true.

None who indulged a free exercise of reason, and weighed the circumstances, could for a moment encourage the report, that in the face of a veteran guard of Romans, the dispirited, weak, disconsolate disciples could, in the hour of midnight, steal into the garden where the sepulchre was, roll away a great stone from its mouth, go in, and bring forth a dead body; deliberately wrap up the grave-clothes, and lay them in distinct parcels; and all this without waking one of the guard. The fact really was, the angels of God proved too much for the Roman soldiers. When these were seen encompassed with the radiance of heaven, when the earthquake was felt, inspired with amazement and terror, they ran to the city, and shewed all that was done.

We see upon the followers of Jesus the immediate operation of this fact, that Christ was risen indeed. Previous to this event, the apostles, with a weak and tremulous faith, forsook their master; and one of them, in the
moment

moment of trial, denied even that he knew the man: and yet these same men, after the proofs afforded them of his resurrection, asserted their belief and their attachment to him with undaunted resolution; they from that hour declared, that their faith in the gospel was firm and immovable. Peter, who so lately shrunk from the charge of being one of his disciples, now, in the face of the whole sanhedrim, avows Jesus Christ to be his Lord; charges the Jewish rulers with his murder, and proclaims his resurrection. Thomas, whose unbelief ought to render the faith of all the followers of Jesus steadfast, adored his risen Saviour as his Lord and his God. They all with one voice declared the lately crucified Saviour to be the risen Messiah. They avowed it too, at the hazard of all things, upon scaffolds, and on the cross: they cheerfully shed their blood in confirmation of the truth that the Lord is risen. It was in vain that infidelity attempted to oppose the fact. The arts and the opposition of the high priests were found equally deficient to suppress the accumulated evidence that Christ was risen from the dead. It is a truth which is become the anchor of our faith, sure, and steadfast. And if Jesus be risen, then

his incarnation, his equality with the Father, his infinite merits as our atoning Saviour, his dignity as head of the church, and as the Redeemer of men, is established. The whole œconomy of God from the creation is discovered: types are followed by the reality; shadows are dissipated by the substance; the prophecies are accomplished; that mixture of humility and grandeur, which had united to form the character of the Messiah, no longer remains an enigma; the prejudices of the Jews are proved groundless, and the long-promised Shilo appears—not indeed as the conqueror, which they had fondly imagined, who was to enrich Jerusalem with the spoils of the universe, but the conqueror of sin and Satan: his triumphs are over death, his conquests over the powers of darkness. Viewing Jesus as a spiritual monarch, and as ruling a kingdom, but not of this world, every thing becomes clear; the Jewish ceremonies are unveiled, and the most costly sacrifices have their significance. The resurrection of Christ sheds the beams of everlasting day over our holy religion, and shews it, in every progressive dispensation, to have been the handy-work of God, clothed in the characters of eternal truth.

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The evidence, then, offered in behalf of the resurrection of Jesus, amounts to full proof; and, what is still more interesting to us, we are taught to consider ourselves as risen with Christ: "And if ye be risen with Christ," says the apostle, "seek those things which are above." The importance of eternal things, presented to our view in the gospel, is intended to gain an ascendancy in our hearts over the attractions of sensible objects, and to give us a decided attachment to a future glorious recompence of reward.

The Christian finds in the resurrection of Jesus Christ motives to animate his hope. It is a sure pledge of the fulfilment of all God's promises: it shews him Jesus, by this consummation of a life of pain and suffering, breaking down the wall of separation which interposed between God and man; displaying the blessedness of the heavenly Canaan before him; opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and introducing to his eternal sanctuary the faithful of every age. It is hence that the disciple of Jesus, who sleeps in death, rests not without hope. He descends to the grave, in confidence that he who called the

world out of nothing, shall assemble the sleeping dust of the righteous from the four corners of the earth; shall cover them with the beams of his own glory, and clothe them with immortality.

In this prospect then, Christians, your hopes may arise; your hearts may possess a sure and humble confidence; your faith may transport you to the abode of your Master; you may indulge a laudable impatience to depart and to be with Christ; you may look forward towards that day which shall unite you with God for evermore.

There the body, worn out under the fatigues and infirmities of this anxious life, shall find its rest in the bosom of its Creator. The soul which, during its exile on earth, hath endured temptation, hath resisted the fiercest assaults of Satan, hath conquered this present evil world, shall find its reward in that life which is hid with Christ in God.

It is in this view that the gospel, and its most rigid rules, appear no longer austere. Tribulations and trials lose the severity of their aspect,

aspect, and are beheld as “working out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Amidst the pains of dissolution, the hopes of a future eternal rest, support and comfort the drooping faint. Those hopes have inspired the holy confessors to hazard their all; have animated the faithful to brave the frown of tyranny, and to triumph over the extreme of torture; have afforded an antidote to the most pungent grief, and fortified the mind against poverty and disease, against agony and death.

In a word, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a source of grace, which fixes the believer's perseverance in a course of well-doing. We may now look up to heaven, and consider our exalted head as ready to shed his grace upon us—“grace to help us in time of need.” Our High Priest hath now entered within the veil; and, to render our salvation sure, hath sat down on the right hand of God, to make intercession for us. There he presents himself as a living sacrifice; there, as the atoning victim, he obtains our pardon and our peace, and pours forth abundantly of the dew of heaven.

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The exaltation of the Son of God brings heaven and earth together. It has removed the space which existed between the grace which justifies, and the goodness which crowns. It gives vigour to the faint glimmering of faith, and leads the eye forward to that full blaze of meridian glory which shall appear at the final manifestation of the sons of God. We now see the dawn of the Sun of Righteousness; he has thrown his first rays upon the earth: hereafter we shall see him in his full splendour, shining for ever over the blessed inhabitants of the world above.

May no one in this congregation see him with terror and confusion. Ye behold in the cross of Christ, how infinite justice can punish sin. If ye make not his expiation your refuge, "there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." He is raised to be the king and head of his people, to bless, and to make happy: but he is also ordained to be the judge of the world; and before his judgment-seat we must all appear, to answer for all the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or
whether

whether they be evil.—“ Kifs the Son, then, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, if his anger be kindled, yea but a little:—blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

S E R M O N XIX.

W H I T - S U N D A Y.

MATT. xxviii. 20.

*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end
of the world.*

WE this morning commemorate the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the first disciples of Christ—upon the whole multitude of Christians. But, my brethren, if that be all, we may as well commemorate the sun which arose upon the day of Pentecost, and directed the steps of the first Christians to walk about Jerusalem.

The Holy Ghost is that to the spiritual
world,

world, in all ages, which the natural sun is to the universe. He is the life-giving source of every communication between God, and man. He always was, and always will be, the enlightener, and the guide, and the comforter of every good man. The event which we recollect this day, was only an extraordinary method which the Spirit of God took to qualify the apostles and first Christians for the work which lay before them. He endued them with the gift of tongues, that they might preach the gospel of Christ intelligibly, whether in Greece or in Britain, in Jerusalem or in India. He gave them miraculous powers, to convince the nations where they came that the gospel they preached was from heaven, and the power of God unto salvation. This gospel having been extended, according to the will of its Author, those first gifts were withdrawn; and therefore it cannot be in this sense that Christ is to be with his disciples "always, even unto the end of the world."

Suppose I were to ask you this morning,
what you mean by that particular article of your
5 creed,

creed, wherein you profess to believe in the Holy Ghost as the author, and giver of life: you certainly must be supposed to have some ideas affixed to this confession; for, to impute to you a language for which you have no meaning, would be degrading you beneath the level of rational beings. And yet, I know not how it comes to pass, but it is a fact, that there are a great many persons who solemnly profess, in the courts of the Lord's house, that they believe in the Holy Ghost, who, if you mention any thing that favours of his influence in another situation, will treat every thing of the kind with contempt, and indignation: and yet, a moment's reflection will shew a strange inconsistency in these same characters. Suppose, for instance, you address one of them, and say, Sir, you believe there is a God; but, let me tell you, that this God has nothing at all to do with you: he has left you; he has given you up entirely; you are a poor orphan man; you have no God and Father to take care of you——with what kind of temper do you think such a one would hear this declaration? This very man, who before was laughing at inspiration, and arguing against a divine influ-

influence, the moment you apply his principles to himself, would think you his greatest enemy, and that you were giving him up to certain ruin, and perdition. My brethren, I intend this discourse as an attempt to do away false, and absurd prejudices, and to lay before you, in as plain a manner as I am able, the scripture doctrine of Christ's, or God's, spiritual presence (they are the same with me) for the purposes of mercy, of grace, and salvation, through all ages, till time shall be no more.— That this influence existed before the flood is evident. God sent Noah to the old world as a preacher of righteousness; and when his ministry proved ineffectual to reform the abandoned manners of that day, God said, “ My Spirit shall not always strive with man.”— You will easily conclude, from this expression, that God had striven with them; that he had given them proper warnings; that he had offered them proper motives; that he had granted them a sufficient space for repentance. Another observation I would make on this circumstance is, that when his Spirit ceased to strive with them, their warnings ceased; their motives were withdrawn; their time, their
day

day of grace, ended. Noah entered his ark; the Lord shut him in; and the flood came and destroyed them all.

In the subsequent ages of the patriarchs, the influence of the Spirit of God was equally manifest. He not only had a decided influence over their minds, but he frequently conversed with them, directing their plan of life, assuring them of his favour, giving them many gracious promises of future blessings, and at all times declaring that he would be their shield and their exceeding great reward. Through the prophetic ages the same Holy Spirit impressed the great designs of God upon his servants; influenced them to foretel events which could only be known to infinite prescience. They directed the world to look to a distant but certain period, when there should be a full manifestation of the glory of God, in his mercy and compassion towards his creatures; when himself should come to the second temple, and render it more illustrious than that magnificent and glorious one built by Solomon. Towards this distant event pious men of old looked with ardent expectation. Some of them expressed themselves as waiting for this

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salvation;

salvation ; others as longing for it: all of them resting their hopes upon, and dying in the faith of, a promised Messiah. “ These all died in the faith,” says the apostle, “ not having yet received the promises.”

We see, as in the case of good old Simeon, at the opening of the New Testament, how certainly the influence of the Spirit of God is connected with true devotion. “ There was a man at Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him: and it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ; and he came by the Spirit into the temple.” So that nothing can be more clear than this fact, that the Spirit of God, in all ages before Christ, was the guide and comforter of all good men. “ But, behold the days come,” saith the Lord, “ that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” This gracious influence was to be more abundantly extended, was to be more openly displayed, more powerfully felt, by the immediate disciples of Jesus Christ: and it was so—
“ they each spake as the Spirit gave them utterance,”

utterance," with other tongues than those in which they were born; they each made known the wonderful works of God; they each declared the glories of his gospel; they each proclaimed a Saviour crucified, a Saviour risen, a Saviour interceding at God's right hand for a guilty world. To these truths the Spirit of God affixed his seal in the hearts of thousands. Their sound went out into all lands, and in all lands the sound of salvation by Jesus Christ was received. The barbarians forsook their idols; the Greeks, and Romans, the altars of their false gods, and bowed before the all-conquering arm of Jesus Christ, "so mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed." Thus far, then, we come upon scriptural authority. We see the Spirit of God, from the earliest ages, as the director, and supporter, of all good men; we behold the same Spirit poured forth without measure upon Jesus Christ, his apostles, and first ministers; and we have in our text the express promise of our Saviour, that he would be with his sincere disciples and followers "always, even unto the end of the world." Into the nature of this promise we are immediately concerned to enquire; and for this reason the apostle assures us, that "as many as are led by the Spirit of

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God,

God, they are the sons of God ;” and “ if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” So that this is not an article of our creed, merely speculative, unessential, uninteresting, but an important, all-concerning truth, that “ if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The first observation I shall make in this enquiry is, that if the influence of the Spirit of God was necessary at all after the fall of man, that influence must continue to be necessary whilst man continues to be the same kind of being. No revelation from God, either under the law or gospel, has made any change in the nature of man. He was, and he is, by nature, born in sin, and an heir of wrath. If the divine influence was ever requisite, then, to operate with power to subdue sin, and to deliver from wrath, in any individual, the same operation must be requisite to produce the like effects in any part of the species. Hence it is, that Jesus Christ has described the Holy Spirit as a convincer of sin, as a guide into all truth, as a comforter, and as a sanctifier. Under these characters are comprehended all the effects wrought in the understanding, in the heart, and in the life, of all true Christians: but,
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though certain effects are wrought, yet the means by which they are wrought will not admit of any express rule to judge of their commencement. His work of conviction, for instance, is wrought variously: sometimes by the serious reflection of the sinner upon his own ways, occasioned, it may be, by the ministry of God's word, or by some alarming stroke of Providence, in respect to some of his friends or neighbours; sometimes by personal affliction, by severe losses, by sickness, or by the death of some one who was very dear to him. It is very remarkable, how differently sin appears to us in the midst of prosperity and adversity: when we are happy in the enjoyment of all good, surrounded by our friends, strangers to the visitation of God, we can amuse ourselves with forbidden pleasures, we can venture into the paths of the destroyer, we can mingle in the society of wicked men, associate with the libertine, pass over the blasphemy of the profane; there appears, perhaps, nothing hateful or disgusting in the tents of the ungodly. The Almighty sees our folly; and, determined to rescue us from ruin, he lays his hand first upon one comfort, then upon another: our way, which was lately strewed with roses, becomes now a thorny path;

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our persons are attacked with disease, our fortunes are subjected to sudden vicissitudes, and we sigh for the very disquietude of our heart. This brings on reflection, and reflection is succeeded by conviction. We see sin with very different eyes; we view God as a very different being; we are plunged into a gulf of wretchedness; and we fear, it may be, that the sins we have committed are so many in number, and so heinous in their nature, that there is no remedy, nor any hope concerning us. Thus the Spirit of God, without, it may be, the subject of this influence being at all sensible by whose agency he is leading forward, becomes his guide. The worst of his situation being laid before him, his whole heart appearing in its native deformity, he is led on to enquire after the nature of God, his disposition to the exercise of mercy, the manifestations of his grace in the gospel, the character and offices of Jesus Christ: he sees in all these a suitableness to his wants, a balm for his wounded spirit, and an antidote to all his fears. Hence the Spirit of God exercises his other character of a comforter: the subject of his influence becomes impressed with a sense of the faithfulness of God;

God; with the full satisfaction his violated attributes, and offended justice, have received at the hands of his Surety; and, being brought to the most humbling sense of his own unworthiness, he believes that there is in the Son of God a fulness, an all-sufficiency of grace, and of salvation: he therefore finds the troubles of his mind subsiding into a calm, and a peace taking possession of his soul, which passeth all understanding. Being brought thus far, the Spirit of God proceeds in his last work of sanctification: the man is reformed; true repentance introduces an hatred of sin; the habits are totally changed; a regular, moral, holy life succeeds; and every thing conspires to prove, that "old things are passed away, and that all things are become new." Now thus is Jesus Christ with his church "always, even to the end of the world."

This is the doctrine of the holy scriptures. And is it not, my brethren, in every view, a most comfortable doctrine? We all find in ourselves, a strange propensity to evil; hearts by nature disinclined to God, and goodness; continually exposed to the temptations of an adversary, who appears to be a master of sub-

tlety, and diffimulation; whose arts we find ourselves unequal to oppose, and with whose power we cannot successfully contend. Is it not pleasing to be in the possession of a confidence that God is with us; to be impressed with this important fact, that there is no situation where God is not? This impression will have a tendency to awe us when presumptuous sins solicit, and to cheer the despondency of our hearts when we suffer through some involuntary failure in our duty. What a pleasure must it be to a truly pious mind, to indulge a firm persuasion that the wisdom of God is engaged to direct, that the power of God is near to support, and that the compassion of God is ready to console! It was in this view that the saints of the Old Testament could say with confidence, "more be they that be for us, than they that be against us;" and that those of the New could with triumph ask, "Who shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Indulge, then, my brethren, this comfortable persuasion, that the Spirit of God is with you. Fear lest you should counteract those impressions, which, if indulged and cultivated, would have an effectual tendency to save your souls. The Spirit of God is said to strive

strive with men; and men are said to resist his strivings. He is said to call, and that men refuse to hear: he is described as establishing, strengthening, settling; and yet men are cautioned against grieving “the Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption.” It is not likely that any of you should have lived strangers to this influence more or less. It is common with God to exercise this influence through the medium of conscience: here he persuades, here he applauds, and here he condemns. Do not then stifle the voice of conscience; hear what it has to say to you: it will not deceive, until it be deadened by the repetition of your crimes. If you will not hear, it may at present cease to reproach you; but hereafter it will rise up in judgment to condemn: it will be the worm that dieth not; it will be the fire that is not quenched.

I have attempted to shew you very briefly the certainty and the reasonableness of the Holy Spirit’s existence, upon the foot of the divine testimony, from the creation until the coming of Christ; and have asserted the necessity of the same influence until the end of the world. We are not called upon to explain
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to you with precision the nature of this influence; nor to say, on all occasions, how this influence is manifested. It ought to be sufficient to curb vice to know, that God surrounds us continually; that neither darkness nor distance can conceal us from his presence. It ought to be sufficient, for the support of piety, that the divine presence directs and supports, and will preserve, until the day of God. David described this glorious person as his Shepherd, who chose his pasture, and furnished him with the cool and refreshing streams; whose friendly crook, and whose staff, should support him in the midst of the dark valley of the shadow of death. Jesus Christ has described himself in the same character, as the Shepherd of his people; as being their guide, their deliverer, and their ransom. May you, my brethren, follow his leadings; may you be attentive to his voice, that you may finally share in his salvation. Take heed lest you sin away your day of mercy, and do despite to the Spirit of his grace. He bore with the stubbornness of Israel forty years; but he at last swore that they should not enter into his rest. If your impotence, and unbelief, should occasion the re-

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newal of this dreadful decision, we may drop a tear of commiseration over you, but we cannot save you from ruin ! Look up, then, to Jesus ; confide in his mercy, who has promised to be with, and to bless you. Cherish the first impressions of his good Spirit, devote your lives to his praise, and he will guide you in the paths of peace, until he bring you to the realms of glory.

S E R M O N XX.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

I JOHN, v. 7.

There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.

THESE words concur to promote the general end which the apostle had in view in penning this epistle. He wished that the infant church of Christ might be established in the true faith, in opposition to those false teachers, who, even in his days, under the character of pastors, had got into the bosom of the church, and ravaged the flock. Already the mystery of iniquity abounded; already a lying spirit exalted itself against the gospel,
and

and inspired those subverters of its sacred truths, whose odious characters and impious sentiments are handed down to posterity in ecclesiastical history. Wherever the apostle turned, his ears were offended by discourses injurious to the glory of the great Author of our faith.

To defend that glory, to exalt his Saviour, to recommend him to the world as with the Father, and the Son, the self-existent God, united in counsel to effect the everlasting salvation of his people, he employs this epistle.

And that this salvation was effected, in the full extent of the divine counsel, he produces six witnesses; three on earth, and three in heaven: on earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood; in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.

It is an established maxim in the divinity of protestants, that the scripture contains all the truths necessary to salvation.—It is the perfect law of the Lord, converting the soul, and making those who are in Christ Jesus wise unto salvation.

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When we propose to you the doctrine of the Trinity, as taught us in the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, we do not pretend to go into the depths of this mystery, or to reduce it to the level of human conception; but we declare to you that it is a doctrine of divine revelation, and say that this is what the scripture teaches. We establish the truth of the doctrine upon the decisions of the Holy Spirit; at the same time confessing, with humility, that we cannot explain the doctrine. We do not hesitate to avow, that the manner in which one God exists in three persons, remains covered with an impenetrable veil from our weak comprehension.

We only wish to engage your obedience to the faith; we intreat you to subscribe to the truth of God, and to render the homage of your adoration to that great Supreme, who has manifested himself in the gospel as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Without, then, entering at all into the controversy which has so long, and so violently, engaged furious disputants, and proud reasoners, I propose only to mention some of those ideas which the holy scripture gives us
upon

upon this mysterious subject. Following the track through which divine revelation leads us, and which is as a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths, we shall discover those principles which, in union, give full authority to the assertion of the apostle, that "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one," and will demonstrate this fundamental article of our faith, that there are three divine persons in one essence.

We find, in holy scripture, that when the Almighty is spoken of, he is frequently mentioned in terms which convey the ideas of plurality.

At the creation of the world, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Previous to the destruction of Sodom, it is said that "the Lord appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre: and he lifted up his eyes, and looked, and lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord,

Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant.—And *they* said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And *he* said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent-door, which was behind *him*;" that is, behind the Lord. "And Sarah laughed. And *the Lord* said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? And Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And *he* said, Nay, but thou didst laugh.—And *the men* arose from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them, to bring them on the way. And *the Lord* said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? And *the Lord* said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now.—And *the men* turned their faces from thence toward Sodom." But you will observe, that only two of the three went towards Sodom—one was left; and it is said, that "Abraham yet stood," although there was but one, he "yet stood before the

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Lord."

Lord." The other two "came to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing, rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself toward the ground; and he said, Behold now, *my Lords*, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house."—They did so: and the house being attacked by the men of Sodom, they were smote by Lot's guests with blindness, both small and great.—"And *the men* said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place; for *we* will destroy this place.—And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, and said, Up, for *the Lord* will destroy this city: but he seemed as one that mocked." The family of Lot lingering in the morning, and unwilling to leave the devoted city, "the men laid hold of their hands, *the Lord* being merciful unto him;—and when *they* had brought him forth, *he* said, Escape for thy life. And Lot said unto *them*, Oh not so, *my Lord*."

You will here observe, that the persons, spoken of under the plural names of the three men, the two angels, and in

the singular, the Lord, are addressed and worshipped as the great Supreme, as the arbiter of life and death, who can save, and who can destroy. Abraham stood before the Lord when there were three; they speak to him as one: he stood before the Lord when there was one; and Lot stood before him, addressed him as the Lord, when there were two, and was accepted, the Lord saying, "I will not overthrow the city for which thou hast spoken."

The author of the 45th Psalm, speaking to that divine person whose wonderful works he proclaimed and extolled, cries out, "O God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." In the 110th Psalm, he expresses himself in this language: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou upon my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."—"Now," says our blessed Redeemer, in his reasoning upon this subject, "if he (the Messiah) was David's Lord, how was he then his son?"

These scriptures, from the Old Testament, might of themselves suffice to explain the text, which asserts, "there are three that

bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost:" but the Christian faith admits of the most clear, decided, unequivocal confirmation, from the multitude of testimonies to be drawn from the New Testament in its favour. It is plainly declared in my text. You see it in this argument of St. Paul—" Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." You see it in the institution of our baptism—" Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." You hear it constantly in the general benediction—" The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

The divine persons are represented as united among themselves by the communion of those attributes which the idea of a perfect being includes. For what are the perfections which distinguish the infinite God? Is it the eternity of his existence. This is attributed to the Son as ~~to~~ the Father. He is called the " Alpha
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pha and the Omega, the beginning and the end ; who is, who was, and who is to come."

Is it his omniscience? This is attributed to the Holy Ghost as to the Father. "It is the Spirit that searcheth all things; yea, even the deep things of God."

So as to the homage which, as Christians, we owe, and are as Christians commanded to pay, unto the only true God, the scriptures affociate the Son and the Holy Ghost in the same worship which is paid unto the Father. To these we were consecrated in our baptism; and from these we are to expect all the blessings of this world, and of that which is to come.

These divine persons are distinguished in the scriptures by certain characters, which are never transferred the one to the other. This is plain from the passages already cited; and it appears to be confirmed by many others. The second person in the ever-blessed Trinity is known by the appellation of the Son; “I will declare,” says God, “the decree, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee:”—and at his baptism, a voice was heard from heaven,

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saying,

saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—The Holy Ghost is spoken of as the Comforter: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."—Thus, by a close consideration of God's word, we shall perceive, that there are things said of the Father, which are never spoken of the Son; and there are things said of the Son, which are never spoken of the Holy Ghost; and of the Holy Ghost, which are spoken neither of the Father nor of the Son. God is said so to love the world, as to give his only begotten Son: the Son is said to lay down his life for the ransom of the world: the Holy Ghost is described to be the applier of the truths of the gospel to the heart; to be the instructor, guide, comforter, and sanctifier of all believers. And what the scripture thus affirms, we are to receive, not as the word of man, whose opinions may be involved in mistake and error, but as the word of God, "with whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning." The Christian faith thus fixes upon the immovable basis of eternal truth.—The confession we make of the
Father.

Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is that which divine inspiration hath furnished us with. Revelation cannot contradict itself; and this revelation, when it tells us that there is but one God, and attributes this wonderful name to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, each possessing peculiar properties, leads us necessarily to conclude that, in the infinite being of the Godhead there exists three distinct persons:—a fact which we ought submissively to believe, upon the authority of him who has revealed just so much unto us, although we can comprehend no more of the subject than is so revealed:—it is a mystery which, as ministers of Christ, we are obliged to insist on before you, though it be beyond our abilities to make you fully comprehend:—it is a mystery, so strictly united with all the doctrines which form the evangelical system, that upon it we found our hopes of salvation.

This doctrine is truly the mystery of the gospel. It was for the œconomy of grace that the declaration of it was reserved: it was for the apostles, as the ministers of mercy, to assure us, that God was in Christ reconciling the

world unto himself. Never could reason have ascended to this contemplation of the infinite God. The sources of our understanding are so confined, and so limited in their course, that all which regards the being of God lies hidden in the shades of night. If, even with all the assistance of revelation, we find this doctrine of a God incarnate, the mystery of godliness a height and a depth which surpasseth all knowledge, how can the mystery of the Trinity, upon which the doctrine of the incarnation is founded, be discovered by the short line of human perception? If even the angels of glory are represented to us as stooping down to look into it, by what means can man, guided only by the tremulous glimmering of human reason, ascend into that light which no man can approach unto?—I said, that the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, is founded upon the doctrine of the Trinity; and, although they are both mysterious, yet the one seems to admit of a greater degree of demonstration than the other; and if the one be demonstrated, the other is certainly proved.

The incarnation of the Son of God is revealed

vealed in the most exprefs manner : “ The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ; and we beheld his glory, even the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth—who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of noreputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.” An admission of the primæval glory and dignity of Jesus Christ, is so essential to the Christian faith, that our apostle declares that he that denies it is Antichrist : “ Whoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son.” It pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell ; that, by being equal to the undertaking of “ making peace by the blood of his cross, he should reconcile all things unto himself.” This satisfaction, made by a person so divinely qualified to make it, is represented as the last great and crowning effort of Almighty love : and indeed all the other blessings of God comparatively disappear, in the presence of this.

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The inspired writers, when speaking on this subject, seem as if they could never say enough. If you ask St. Paul, upon what demonstration of the divine goodness he presumed to found his exalted hopes of an eternal weight of glory? he answers, Upon the cross of Christ: "For he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" If you ask St. John, in what manner the infinitely glorious God made himself known to the world? he answers, By the cross of Christ: "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."—If the value of the death of Christ were to be estimated only by that excellence which he possessed as the son of Mary; if faith viewed him only as an human victim, expiring in spotless innocence; whence that admiration, whence those transports, in which apostles, martyrs, and confessors, in all ages, have spoken of what God has done by him for our salvation? The distance is so infinite between God and his creatures, however pure, excellent, and holy, that, if Jesus Christ were not God, the appellations with which we honour him would at once be ridiculous, extravagant,

vagant, and blasphemous. But, viewing him as the Son of God, descending from the bosom of his Father, to save from destruction sinners of mankind — then our ascriptions become just—the love of God rises to a supreme point of distinction — herein was love! This was a degree of pity, and compassion, which human language cannot describe; in which the imagination is lost; and of which the hearts of true believers alone can experience the blessedness.

The use we ought to make of the few reflections which I have now offered you is plain. Be you not unconcerned spectators of those truths, which are not declared to excite a barren admiration, but to create in our hearts a love of those duties which Jesus Christ has traced out for us in the gospel, and to serve as so many motives to lead us to run the race that is set before us. We wish to raise in your hearts sentiments of gratitude to that God, who hath manifested, in the œconomy of redemption, the infinite treasures of wisdom and love: to bring you to consider what returns you are required to make for that love of the Father, who hath given his only begotten Son to die for you; and that love of the Son, which interposed to deliver you from misery, and made him
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willing to acquaint himself with a just feeling of your infirmities, that he might afford you help in time of need. The true Christain can never lose sight of the blessings of this redemption. He makes them the object of his frequent study. In the view of that punishment which his sin deserved, and from which he has been delivered by the obedience of the Son of God to the death of the cross, he asks, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" What am I, a poor guilty sinner, a sinner utterly unworthy the divine regard—who am I, that he should stoop, that he should reach forth his hand, that he should draw me from destruction, and pay my ransom with his own blood? "O God! what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst so regard him? Many are the wonderful works which thou hast done; and thy thoughts which are to usward, they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." These are the sentiments with which you ought to be animated, and with them you will be animated, if you possess that faith "which is the substance of things hoped for,

for, and the evidence of things not seen;" a faith which presents to the Christian Jesus Christ evidently set forth as once crucified, but now exalted at the right hand of God, angels, authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.

If you do not cultivate this faith; if, by a criminal neglect of the great business of your salvation, you become indifferent to the contemplation of this mystery of godliness; you may be satisfied with your situation, but you are strangers to that life eternal, which consists in a knowledge of "the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." The faith of the gospel must be weak where a love of this present world has established its dominion. Our profession and our conduct must be in perfect harmony, if we wish to enjoy the love of that God, who hath called us to his kingdom, and glory. All our actions must carry the impression with which the Holy Ghost seals true Christians unto the day of redemption. If we are the servants of sin, strangers to the grace of God, the objects of religion will either on the one hand become despicable to us, or on the other be full of terror, and condemnation.

When the Supreme Judge shall hereafter be seated upon his throne, his displeasure will be manifested in proportion as we have neglected the means of knowledge, the offers of his grace, and the wonders of his redemption.—That Son, who was willing to die that we might live, will leave those to sure destruction, who preferred in their hearts the enemy of God, to the Author and finisher of salvation. That holy Spirit, which spreads his graces so abundantly in the hearts of the followers of Christ Jesus, will not only deprive such careless sinners of his saving benefits, but will deliver them to that fatal blindness and hardness of heart, which arise from the rejection of divine mercy, and which will form the first fruits of those torments which are to be the portion of the wicked for ever.

Let us flee then from that path which conducts the unbelieving, the presumptuous, and impenitent sinner to condemnation. Let us flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel. Let us take sanctuary in the love of God, in the blood of Jesus Christ, in the graces and comforts of the Holy Ghost. Let us walk according to the scriptures, where

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we shall ever have eternal truth for our guide. Let us chearfully submit our reason to revelation, and go on from faith to faith, and from love to love, "growing up in him which is the head, even Christ." Let us daily beg for the good Spirit of God to carry on that work of sanctification in our hearts, which in its perfection forms the happiness of the glorified above; and may we all finally experience the gracious effect of the prayer of our blessed Redeemer: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world: that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us."

S E R M O N XXI.

SCRUPLES REMOVED IN RESPECT TO THE
SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST *.

MARK, iii. 28, 29.

Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.

IN the investigation of religious truth, it is extremely natural for the serious mind to revolve those doctrines which seem of the greatest weight, and of uncommon importance.

The necessary and saving articles of our holy faith lie level to the comprehension of every sincere and humble inquirer; the essential du-

* Published by particular request.

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ties of religion may be easily known to all who have an honest intention to practise them: but there are other points, here and there to be met with in holy scripture, which seem more ambiguous and hard to be understood; and yet having penalties of such infinite moment annexed to them, that they strike the soul with awe, and not unfrequently prove a source of uneasiness to the most upright in heart.

This reasoning will apply immediately to the text, which I have chosen to recommend to your attention this morning; and my reason for choosing it is, because I know that it often has occasioned the most alarming apprehensions in the minds of many, and because I am persuaded that it is the duty of those who are placed over you, and admonish you in the Lord, to attempt to remove these apprehensions.

I shall therefore endeavour to state to you, as plainly as I can, the nature of the sin mentioned by our Saviour in the passage before us; and I trust this explanation will have a tendency to quiet the apprehensions of all such

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as may have been alarmed for their safety, in consequence of a suspicion that they may have been guilty of this crime.

Your attention will be required, first, to the circumstances which gave rise to the words of the text. They were these:—Jesus Christ had gone throughout Judea healing all manner of diseases and infirmities : he wrought signs and wonders before God, and all the people ; he gave sight to the blind, feet to the lame, ears to the deaf, and life to the dead ; he fed the multitudes by miracle, and healed all those which were oppressed with the devil ; and the scribes who came down from Jerusalem, and saw those mighty works, and especially this last act of casting out devils, said, “ He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.” And he called them unto him, and said, “ How can Satan cast out Satan ?” As if our Lord had said, “ Your assertion contradicts itself : if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. You scribes, who boast yourselves of superior knowledge, you know the world sufficiently to judge of the consequences of civil war and domestic commotions, and that they

directly tend to interior desolation. If even an house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand; and so, if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. You see, therefore, the absurdity of your charge, and the world must judge of that degree of malice which drives you to this absurdity."

"It is well known, that no man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house. My conduct on this occasion lies open to the calm decisions of reason. Satan, like a strong man, has too long usurped dominion over the persons, and conduct of many, of the unhappy objects which you have seen: some he has influenced by a settled melancholy; some to the most extravagant frenzy; some to a train of calamitous diseases; some to all the horrors of madness and despair. I have convinced you that this influence was subject to my authority, and under my controul. I have entered this strong man's house, I have bound him, and destroyed his power; I have healed the diseased both in mind and body. Behold the poor wretched man, lately running
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naked and fierce among the tombs, a terror to the neighbourhood, but a greater terror to himself: chains were as tow in the hands of this demoniac, and no man durst attempt to tame him. Behold him here, sitting at my feet, tranquil, clothed, and in his right mind. To what purpose have I displayed this power? Is it to serve the interest of Beelzebub that I am calling finners to repentance, that I am warning them to throw off their subjection to the prince of darkness, and to serve the living God in newness of life? Does this look like a league with Beelzebub, that I am wresting the captive sinner from his power, depopulating his kingdom, and subverting his empire? Scribes and Pharisees, your conduct on this occasion has so much the complexion of rancour at heart, and unconquerable prejudice, that your danger is great, and your destruction nearly certain.—All sins shall indeed be forgiven unto men, and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation—because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.”

You hence become acquainted, not only
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with the circumstances which gave rise to the text, but are enabled to form a just opinion of the characters of the persons unto whom it was addressed.

They were persons who had the most comprehensive means of knowing the character of Jesus Christ ; they had a proper opportunity of weighing the motives upon which his miracles were wrought, the ends unto which they were directed, and the mighty power with which they were accompanied.

Had there been the smallest appearance of disguise in the operations of the Son of God ; had they given countenance to licentiousness, or tended at all to the encouragement of profligacy, their conduct might have assumed the semblance of zeal for the interests of morality, and in some measure have justified the severity of their insinuation—" He casteth out devils through Beelzebub ;" but when we see a life devoted to every act that can do honour to humanity ; when we see the blessed Jesus travelling from city to city, and from village to village, to cheer the habitations of woe, to lift the mourning soul from despondency, to raise the

the diseased from the couch of misery, “to bind up the broken-hearted, to preach liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that were bound,” to console the heart of the dejected parent, to lift from despair the childless widow; in a word, declaring the glad tidings of salvation to all men: I say, when we trace a character thus delineated in every feature, we must suppose his accusers advanced to the utmost limits of depravity, to have consciences deadened to every impression of virtue, and to have been entirely given up of God, ere they could venture to attack the reputation of Jesus Christ by this impious charge — “He casteth out devils through Beelzebub.”

From what I have now said, one fact becomes obvious—that no persons but those who lived in the days of Jesus Christ could possibly be guilty of the specific crime condemned by my text. The scribes were declared to be in a reprobate and hopeless state, because they said, that he by an unclean spirit cast out devils. This was their crime; from whence I draw this conclusion, that it is utterly impossible that this crime can ever again be repeated in that

same degree of heinousness, with the same aggravations, or incurring the same awful and hopeless sentence of condemnation.

For to render this possible, you must be supposed to have lived on earth with Jesus Christ; you must have had an opportunity of thoroughly knowing his character; you must have heard his mighty words, and seen his mighty works; and, after all, you must have done violence to the full conviction of your minds: you must, for ends merely selfish and political, have rejected every evidence offered to confirm the mission of the Son of God; you must have maliciously denied the evidence of your senses; and, whilst the surrounding multitude were acknowledging that God was with him, you must daringly have affirmed that he “cast out devils thorough Beelzebub the prince of the devils.” These circumstances, laid together, will, I trust, have a tendency to convince you that you are not, that you cannot be, subject to that sentence denounced in my text.

You will hence, then, see the futility of the temptations of Satan, in endeavouring to fill the
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minds of any of you with the fear of having committed what is usually called the unpardonable sin. We would not have you ignorant of Satan's devices. He has long had an experience of the frame and constitution of mankind: he knows that, if he can persuade you that you are beyond the reach of God's mercy, he has advanced you a good step towards despair; he knows that despair will press you on to presumption, and that presumption will end in your final ruin. Instead, therefore, of listening to those suggestions, from which the purest mind cannot always be free, indulge yourselves in the most unbounded confidence in God's mercies; dwell upon the faithfulness of his promise, that "when the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." Consider this promise of our Lord, that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" and again, that declaration of his apostle, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin."

This, however, you will understand as applying to those only who "truly repent
them

them of their sins, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel :”—such only he pardons and absolves.

I am hence led to remark, that there are many persons extremely alarmed about the sin that I have been endeavouring to explain, and yet do not consider, that all sin, if unrepented of, and unforfaken, must ultimately tend to expose them to a similar condemnation. I have endeavoured to free your minds from every cause of fear, as to one particular heinous and destroying sin ; but there are many others, which will as effectually exclude from the kingdom of Christ and of God. It is hence St. Paul exhorts all professors of Christianity to examine themselves ; to “ take heed lest there be in any of them an evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God.” Sound conversion from a life of sin unto righteousness, must be laid as the foundation of the Christian character ; and without this our Lord hath said, that “ no man can enter into the kingdom of God.” This is the work of the Holy Spirit ; and we are told that the effects are certain : “ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it

it cometh, nor whither it goeth; and so is every one that is born of God."

Are any of you resting satisfied with the mere name of Christians, whilst you are dead as to the life and power of the Gospel; equally strangers to faith and to repentance? The whole of religion appears to some of you, perhaps, like an amusing tale, or like a pleasant song. You take care to have nothing more to do with this sacred science, than as it agrees with your pre-established system of pleasure, or profit; but you ought to know, that the man who attains to the approbation of God, or aspires to his kingdom, must make religion his first object; its influence must give firmness to his faith, and operate with power upon his practice. Have you suffered this influence to take possession of your hearts? Examine yourselves. The apostle has told Christians, that they may resist the Holy Spirit; and he exhorts them "not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption." This is done by forgetting our baptismal vows, by trifling with our solemn engagements, "to fight manfully, under Christ's banner, against the world, the flesh,

flesh, and the devil; and to be his faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives end." Alas! what is the warfare of many among us? where are their conquests over the world? what pleasures do they resist? what fashion do they oppose? what allurements does the world hold forth, that they have resolution to forego? what enemy is it that they are fighting against? where is the armour of God? Examine yourselves, Christians! where is your breast-plate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God? These were necessary to form the characters, and to decide the conduct of the first Christians, because they were determined to obtain the kingdom of God. But, alas! how many are there among us who have been baptized into the name of Christ, who care not how they live, nor how they die; to whom oaths are as familiar as the air, their drunkenness their boast, their lasciviousness matter of triumph, who glory in their shame. This is to resist the Spirit of God, to grieve him, to oppose his holy influence, to put the cup of blessing from their lips, and to bring down ruin upon their own heads! My brethren, let this truth sink deep into your minds, that "strait

is the gate, and narrow the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it ; but broad is the way, and wide is the gate, that leadeth unto destruction, and many there be that go in thereat."

Be it your earnest endeavour and first concern, then, to guard against the character of being self-deceivers : look into your own hearts, scrutinize your conduct ; consider whether this world, or the future, preponderates in your affections ; whether Jesus, and his salvation are your chief good, his atonement and righteousness your chief glory. If this be the case, you will live and act consistently ; you will husband well your time ; you will redeem it to the most important purposes, those of studying your own hearts, and cultivating all the habits of genuine piety and fervent devotion : without these you may assume the mask of cheerfulness, you may mix with avidity in the gay world, and lay a tax upon every house of laughter, in order to support the specious semblance of happiness ; but when you retire into yourselves, and examine how matters are between God and you, when you look into futurity, and behold the Judge seated
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and the books opened, you will find a sadness at heart, a sadness, which nothing but faith in Christ, and true penitence, can remove. The sooner you renounce all the false blandishments of worldly pleasure, and betake you to this sanctuary appointed of God, the sooner you will be made partakers of true felicity, and share in the joys of the redeemed of the Lord. The Spirit from on high is ready to give energy to your penitence, and to work in you the work of faith with power: he is ready to help you in all your weaknesses, to sustain you in all your infirmities, and to console you in all your sorrow; he is ready to guide you by his counsel, and afterward, to lead you to his glory. If you refuse to submit to his influence, to hear and obey him, he "will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."

S E R M O N XXII.

THE FOLLY, WICKEDNESS, AND FINAL
CONSEQUENCES OF PROFANENESS.

JAMES, V. 12.

Above all things, my brethren, swear not.

IT was not a matter of very great wonder, that the first professors of Christianity, just emerging from the prejudices of Judaism, or from the blindness of heathen idolatry, should stand in need of the warm and affectionate caution of my text. But, to men of discernment, to men of real religion, in the more enlightened periods of the gospel, it certainly must be matter of great astonishment, to observe the necessity of this advice continued ; nay,

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to observe, that, in proportion to the light that surrounds them, a corresponding propensity prevails, in numbers who call themselves Christians, to resist the light, and to trample upon the laws both of God and man.

The vice from which my text is a dissuasive, is become so exceedingly common, that many seem to have lost all sense of its offensiveness to Heaven. The practice of others gives a kind of sanction to the habit, and men seem as easy under the influence of this destructive sin, as if God had not said, that he would not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain. In this instance the observation of holy writ is particularly confirmed:—"Because vengeance is not immediately executed upon evil doers, therefore the hearts of the children of men are fully set in them to do evil."

Profane swearing, in its nature and in its aggravations, stands alone in the catalogue of sins. For other evil habits, it is easy for men to frame some apology; to offer an excuse which may justify them to others, and be embraced as satisfactory to their own consciences.

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The voluptuary has his gratification in gluttony: a keen appetite, and an high relish for the abundance of the festive board, assume the appearance of justifying him in the most extensive indulgence of his senses. The drunkard feels a temporary elevation of mind, and appears great to himself, in the same proportion as he appears beastly to others. The licentious man pleads the irresistible impulses of nature in excuse for his irregularities, and sometimes is impious enough to charge it upon his Maker, that he has given him passions, without furnishing him with the necessary power to subdue them. The man also who practises deceit and falsehood, if you examine the motives of his conduct, you will find that he has some transaction to disguise, some sinister practices to cover, or some object of interest in view, the means to acquire which he finds it necessary to conceal.

But let me ask the most intelligent among you, what taste that is which, is gratified by an oath? what sense it is, that can feel the impression of pleasure from profaning the name of God? or what profit is held out to the

to observe, that, in proportion to the light that surrounds them, a corresponding propensity prevails, in numbers who call themselves Christians, to resist the light, and to trample upon the laws both of God and man.

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most successful practitioner in this dreadful science ?

Consider further, the greatness and the goodness of that Being against whom this offence is committed. He is the great Creator of all. The operation of his hands proclaims him to be infinite in wisdom, and boundless in power. It is he who called the sun into existence by his word; who spread yon glorious canopy over our heads, where unnumbered worlds revolve and proclaim his might. By his word the earth and the heavens were made. He bade this habitable world go round in the immensity of space; and, without deviation, it has turned for ages in the limits he ordained.

If the Lord spake to holy Job from the whirlwind, and said, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" how much more might he propose the question to the profane swearer, who darkeneth, who setteth all human, and divine counsel at defiance by oaths? "Gird up thy loins," saith God, "for I will demand of thee, and answer me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundation

dation of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding! Who measured the space of its revolution? who stretched the line upon its circumference? who fixed its foundation? who laid the corner stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy? Who formed a barrier for the sea, when it burst from the centre, when I made the cloud a garment, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; here shall thy proud waves be stayed.—Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, and cover thyself in the midst of the waters? Canst thou direct the lightnings, that they may go; and will they say unto thee, Here we are? Hast thou an arm like God; or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?"

Thus doth Omnipotence deign to expostulate with frail man, to convince him at once of his weakness, and of his presumption!

Nor is he only powerful: he is also good. We are the daily objects of his bounty:—"In him," said the apostle, "we live, and move,

and have our being.” His omniscience pervades our necessities: his all-gracious providence provides for our supply and constant accommodation. Is it not he who enriches our valleys with corn; and who, for our support, increases the cattle upon a thousand hills? Is it not the beneficent God that blesses us with health to enjoy this profusion of his goodness; that gives a firm tone to all those powers which are too often employed to insult his authority; that gives activity to those tongues which are daringly exercised in cursing and bitterness?

His goodness is still further manifested in the intervention of the scheme of the blessed gospel. Here it rises into inestimable love! The redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, places the Almighty in a point of view which ought to endear him to the whole race of men; and yet, dreadful instance of human depravity! how many of that race not only neglect the only means of salvation, but daringly insult that gracious Father of all, who has so wonderfully interposed to bless and to save them!

If you thus consider what the Almighty is, what are his power and his goodness, you will at once discern the unreasonableness, the absurdity, and the impiety, of profane swearing. Are not the cattle of the field sensible of the hand that feeds them? Doth not the ox know his owner, and the ass his master's crib? Do not our dogs shew evident tokens of their attachment and gratitude to their keepers? Is there any creature but man capable of abusing, or that discovers any propensity to abuse and insult his benefactor? It ought to be considered further, that the practice of profane swearing is a wanton and unprovoked attack upon the sovereignty of the great God of heaven. It is, indeed, sometimes said in excuse, by those who are subject to this atrocious vice, that it springs from sudden impulse, is the effect of anger, or momentary gusts of passion: but, if you are offended with a fellow-creature, if your passions are roused by any real or supposed affront, is that a reason why you should turn the current of your indignation against God? Has he injured you? Has he deserved such unworthy treatment? Is he to have his name, and his being, and his authority, and all his attributes, insulted by you,

every time you feel yourselves offended, and angry with those around you? Say, is this reasonable? does it do any credit either to your understanding or your heart?

Consider again, the pernicious influence which your conduct is likely to have in your intercourse with society, or in your families, or upon your dependants. Oaths, lawfully administered, have ever been esteemed of the greatest possible consequence to the well-being of society, to the security of states, to the prosperity of bodies corporate, to the happiness, the property, and the lives of individuals. These are often suspended upon this sacred test, which St. Paul describes as the end of controversy; "Where an oath is, there is an end of controversy." But the man who lives in habitual profaneness, whose daily and hourly practice it is to profane the name of the glorious God, what is there binding in an oath to him? Every appellation which is sacred to good men, has been rendered so familiar by habit, that none of them appears serious, awful, or binding. The great name of Jehovah, at which angels bend, and at which devils tremble, has nothing in it that tends to confirm his virtue,
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or to be a pledge of his integrity to the world.

———Besides,

Let it be reflected on, what an unhappy influence such a practice must have upon the conduct of your families or dependants. If you have children, they look up to you as their great example. How dreadful must that example be, if they have been taught by you, wantonly to trifle with the name of God: if by your example they have learned to swear, before they have been instructed to lift up their infant hands in prayer, to the Almighty Father of heaven and of earth.

It becomes you to examine yourselves seriously, whether your practices have not contributed to deprave the minds, to corrupt the morals, and finally to destroy the souls of those, whose interests, whose happiness, whose salvation, ought to be most dear to you, and most ardently promoted by you. If so, with what terror will you reflect, when you lie upon your death-bed, on the said effects of your profaneness! With what confidence can your children approach that bed, to receive your dying advice, or to solicit your parting blessing, when

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they know that your tongues have been habituated to dishonour the name of God, and in sanctioning, by your example, that profaneness, which had a direct tendency to inspire them with the utmost contempt for those divine attributes, which are holy, just, and good!

Let us extend our views a little further, and we shall behold the consequence of this profaneness, in the equitable decisions of eternal justice—in the award of that exquisite punishment, which the offended majesty, and the awakened vengeance, of Omnipotence have ordained, as the portion of all the workers of iniquity.

It is easy for you to conceive, that profane swearers are totally unfitted for the pure and holy society above. The great Creator of the universe is the object of their veneration, and of their love: to him cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory.” How then can these wretched men ever expect to bear a part in that grand, universal, and glorious concert!

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How must they blush, how must they be covered with confusion, to hear that name, with which they have wantonly trifled; that name, which they have invoked only to confirm the scandalous effusions of a corrupted heart—to hear that glorious name then hymned upon the golden harps of the angelic hosts, and in the loud acclamations of the spirits of just men made perfect! The serious and affecting consideration of the state of such sinners at the last day, ought to give full weight to the apostle's admonition—"Above all things, my brethren, swear not."

We will now suppose a case, which we pray God to realize, that a man who has lived in the habit of swearing, from these or such like considerations, reflects on his own practice. He sees this horrid vice founded in absurdity, marked with infamy, and ending in destruction; he considers it as it is offensive to God, in its influence upon society, upon his family, upon all with whom he has connexions; he beholds the end of the ungodly! Alarmed at the dreadful prospect, he is ready to say, "I have plunged so far into this foul crime, that mercy can never extend to me; I fear that
repentance

repentance can promise me no refuge, that the day of grace is past, and that God will never pardon such heinous guilt." If such a person be sincere, it will be evident; his mind will be formed for the reception of this important dissuasion, "Above all things, swear not." If he forsakes this evil habit, that will be a proof of his sincerity; and as to the possibility of obtaining mercy from God, he will then have reason to rely upon a faithful promise, that "he who repents, and forsakes his sins, shall find mercy." Great and aggravated as this offence is, yet there is an all-sufficiency in the blood of expiation to cleanse fully and effectually from it. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," said the Son of God; and his apostle affirms, under the same authority, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin." Go then to the throne of grace! Ask the Almighty to forgive you your sins! Pray for the influence of his holy Spirit, that the thoughts of your hearts may be cleansed, and that the words of your lips may henceforward be pure words.

Look up with humble hope, and with holy
confidence,

confidence, that he who desireth not the death of a sinner, will, if you turn from your wickedness, save your soul alive. If you are thus sincere, if conviction forces upon you a thorough sense of the folly, wickedness, and endless woe, which are connected with this abominable vice, you will certainly endeavour to counteract in future the evil effects which your former habits may have had upon others.

You will watch over your dependants, and more immediately over your children; you will be disposed to adopt the parental language of the Psalmist, and to say, "Come, ye children, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Much of the happiness of the world depends upon paternal attention to the morals of the rising generation: they are a sacred charge committed to us of God; and it in some measure rests with us, to make them either a curse to society, or "a blessing and praise upon the earth." It is especially incumbent upon such as are intrusted with the education of youth, to observe, with the most scrupulous attention, the propensity of young persons to profane language: they are apt to
conceive,

conceive, that oaths, flowing so spontaneously from the mouths of those who are older, and appear so much wiser than themselves, give a sort of consequence to their character, and make them appear great men. In this respect you ought to undeceive them. You must impress them constantly with this idea, that profane swearers are rendering themselves obnoxious to the God who made them, and that they are really despicable in the estimation of all virtuous and good men.—To conclude. May you all live under the constant sense of the omnipresence of the Almighty. May you live a life of faith on his blessed Son, and daily transcribe his tempers and habits into your own. May you have at present the sweet enjoyment of his love, and possess a consciousness of his approval. May his infinite merits affect what, alas! our manifold imperfections must otherwise, after all, prevent; our present pardon, and our final acceptance with the great Judge of all. May he prepare us to join the ten thousand times ten thousand, who are now crying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches,

riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." There the four and twenty elders fall down ; there they worship God who sits upon the throne, saying, " Amen ; Alleluia ! For now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ." Alleluia ! Amen.

S E R M O N XXIII.

THE SECURITY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

I PETER, iii. 13.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

WHEN we consider the state of the Christian church at the time these words were penned, it may surprise us that the apostle should ask his brethren, "Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"

The disciples of Christ were placed in the midst of a people who had rejected their master, who had poured all possible contempt upon his character, and crucified his person :

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his followers were exposed to the same hatred, and shared in the effects of the same vindictive spirit; they had been forewarned that they should be put out of the synagogue, that they should be imprisoned, that they should suffer death for the name of Christ, and yet St. Peter asks, "Who shall harm you?"—If there appears a contradiction here, you will find it removed in the verse immediately preceding my text, "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer." "If ye be reproached," the apostle adds in the next chapter, "for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf: for the time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" It is worthy your notice, that though judgment was to begin at the house of God, yet, even in such a prospect, the apostle could ask,

ask, "Who is he that shall harm you?"—and though the righteous should be scarcely saved, that is, although their progress towards salvation should require much patience, should be attended with much tribulation, nay with a fiery trial, yet he asks, "Who shall harm you?"—Surely the religion of Jesus, and the promises of his gospel, must possess something divinely great, which could thus render every evil of this world of no consideration, and give a complete triumph over all.

There are three particulars arising from my text, a few observations on which will form the subject of this discourse. The first, What is the good of which the apostle supposed his brethren the followers. Secondly, What it is to be followers of this good. Lastly, The security of all such as are thus exercised—nothing shall harm them. "Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"

What is the chief good of man? This is a question which has been agitated in almost every age, and amongst every people. Every man has some object which he esteems his good. The miser sees it in riches, in the

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accumulation of his wealth, in the adding of house to house, and field to field: but do you ask, Who is he that shall harm you, if you be followers of this good? You should rather ask, Who, or what is there that can not harm you? Every man that has it in his power to deprive you of your property can furnish you with a pang; every man that stands between you and the beloved object of your heart, has it in his power to add to your wretchedness. “Who shall harm you?” Your conscience. This shall be your perpetual scourge: it shall tell you how often your heart has been steeled against the calls of human misery; how many distressed widows you might have soothed with but a little of your good; how many orphans tears you might have dried away, had you but unlocked your griping hand, and extended to them the boon of compassion. Perhaps your conscience will tell you also, of the unjust methods you have taken to acquire your good; what secret frauds you have been guilty of, what illiberal advantages you have taken of the ignorance, or necessity, of those with whom you have had commercial connections. “Who shall harm you?” Look but forward to the hour of death; consider yourselves as trembling on the verge of eternity: behold the
dread

dread tribunal of God erected, a full investigation of your conduct taking place, and say what harm have you not to expect, what horror, what confusion, what ruin have you not to fear!

Or is pleasure your good? Is the life of the voluptuary your supreme delight? You eat and you drink, like the Israelites of old, and you rise up to play; the sound of music, the harp, and the viol, are in your feasts. Do you enquire who shall harm you? who shall interrupt the course of your felicity? Your unlawful pleasures! your intemperance! your midnight revellings! these shall harm you. If they do not waste your estates, if they do not beggar your families, yet they will surely undermine your constitution; they will lay the foundation for a train of miserable diseases; they will inspire—in the hour of affliction, and sickness, and trial, they will inspire your consciences with terror, and your souls with anguish. Behold, in the character of Dives, as delineated by Jesus Christ, the end of the sensual and luxurious; “clothed in purple and in fine linen, he fared sumptuously every day:” but his days ended; “it came to pass

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that he died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes," in that dismal abode, where no sounds were heard but those of mourning, lamentation, and woe — "he lifted up his eyes and beheld Lazarus," a poor but pious beggar, whom he had seen miserable and neglected at his door, now "in the bosom of Abraham," solacing in the realms of joy, whilst himself, an outcast from God, was suffering all the agonies of a tormenting flame. In vain he calls for compassion; in vain he begs for a drop of water: the gulph was fixed; the day of grace was ended; the door of mercy shut! Death, and a sad eternity of woe, are the harms that await those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

Or is ambition your good? You covet distinction; you aspire towards some point of elevation, which will render you the admiration or the envy of those beneath you. Ah, my brethren, if you seek the honour which cometh from men, and neglect that which cometh from above, it will not be long before you will find your enchantment broken, your good a broken reed, or perhaps a spear, upon which your peace will bleed, and your hope expire!

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But “who shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” What was the good that the apostle recommended by this pleasing insinuation, that if they followed it, nothing should harm them? It certainly was a firm, an undisguised, a persevering adherence to the doctrines and to the precepts of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He had, in the beginning of this epistle, addressed them as “strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia;” he had addressed them as “the elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” “Blessed,” says he, “be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation—wherefore gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ—as obe-

dient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former desires in your ignorance; but as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

You observe here what it was that the apostle pressed upon the consideration of these strangers; what he recommended to their cordial reception; what he insisted on as necessary to their practice—the foreknowledge and everlasting love of God in choosing mankind to salvation through the mediation of his Son; the necessity of the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ upon the conscience in order to their pardon; the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, to render them obedient to the precepts, and to make them partakers of all the blessings promised in the gospel: in a word, the good of the Christian is reconciliation with his God, an entire renunciation of sin, and a participation of the sovereign mercy of that Being whom he has offended; it is a conscience brought into a state of peace, no longer reproaching us for our presumptuous sins, nor punishing us for the irregular fallies of our depraved hearts. The Christian's ultimate good is the blessedness of heaven, after which he aspires with all the ardour of his soul: he
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views the blessed Jesus as the author of this salvation; his atonement and righteousness form the ground of all his hopes; the instruction, and the example, and the promises of his Saviour, become the one thing needful unto him; they are his choice, and they shall never be taken from him.

Thus am I lead to the second point, which was to shew what it is to be the followers of this supreme good.—Before we become serious in any pursuit, it will always be necessary that we be convinced of the importance and necessity of that pursuit to our happiness: thus, in religion, we must be fully convinced of the necessity of religion before we shall with our hearts become devoted to its duties. If you suffer other subjects to fill up the whole of your time; if you have no inclination to enter upon the serious examination of your own hearts; if you are seldom inclined to think on God; if you do not esteem his approval the only true source of your felicity, you cannot be ranked in the number of those who esteem religion the chief good. Nor does the conviction of the mind alone constitute a follower of this good: the heart must cheerfully receive

it, and the whole man pursue it, as indispensably necessary to his happiness.

Let us suppose a person to have lived a stranger to God, in habits the most dishonourable to his being and government; the slave of his own appetites; an opposer of the truth of his religion; to every good work, as the apostle expresses himself, a reprobate; this man, by some providence of God, afflictive it may be to himself or his family, or by hearing God's word, or by a deliberate reflection on his own ways, sees himself far gone in the paths of the destroyer: he may, perhaps, have been accustomed to profaneness, to intemperance, and to an utter contempt of all that is religious and good; he takes up his Bible, and he views "the wrath of God as revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" he considers his life as far spent, and his everlasting welfare or misery depending upon the event of an hour; he is alarmed at his situation, and trembles, lest all that he fears should be realized, and his soul be for ever undone; he finds nothing in this world that can reach his complaint; he has offended God; he sees him armed with vengeance to punish
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he guilty, and he finds nothing in himself but guilt and misery to offer to the Majesty of heaven. "There be many," says the Psalmist, "who say, Who will shew us any good?" but in this situation the language of the heart is, "Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, and shew me thy salvation." The gospel of Christ, which presents to a poor humble penitent the way of reconciliation, which assures him that God is ready to pardon, which points him to the blood of Jesus Christ as infinitely efficacious to do away the guilt, and to save from the punishment of sin, is of more value than the gold of Ophir, or the spicy mountains of Arabia. It is the sovereign good, because it introduces to his soul, long the prey of anguish and disquietude, that "peace of God which passeth all understanding." When a man is thus impressed with the importance of salvation, and knows something of its blessedness, he becomes a follower of that which is good: you will find him regularly attending a place of public worship; he will be often in his closet engaged in private devotion; he will be no longer the associate of the ungodly; his midnight revellings are ended; his

his oaths are abhorred; his whole delight now is, to love God, and to keep his commandments.

To follow that which is good, implies, finally, a practice of all the social virtues, a mind formed for the imitation of Jesus Christ, who was goodness itself: "He hath left us an example," says the apostle, "that we should follow his steps;" and it is the delight of the Christian to imitate this example; to do good unto all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith; to believe what the gospel teaches, to obey what the gospel enjoins, and to hope for all the blessings which it promises. "Who shall harm you, then, if ye be followers of that which is good?" This is the last point for our consideration.

If the good man thinks a competency necessary for the interests of his family, he pursues his temporal interests with a perfect submission to the God whom he serves in the gospel of his Son. Without having his heart engrossed by the cares and riches of this world, without bidding his soul to take its ease in the enjoyment of the

the much goods which he has laid up for many years, he daily asks the blessing of God's providence upon his lawful employment, and, if he meets with disappointments or losses, he becomes reconciled to these circumstances, believing that all his concerns are in the hands of a Governor, who is infinitely great, and wise, and good. In the participation of the lawful pleasures of this life, he is cautious that they do not engage his affections too deeply, or rob his Maker of that heart which ought to be his alone. If honours and distinction have, from family connections, or particular situations, any value in his estimation, yet these are not coveted to gratify his pride, or to give him a power to do mischief, to oppress, or injure his fellow creatures: under the wise direction and powerful restraints of true religion, his riches, and honours, and pleasures, are made all subservient to his Saviour's glory, and the good of those around him. "Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be thus followers of that which is good?" The events which operate so powerfully upon such as are strangers to religious consolation, have little comparative influence upon the believer's mind: he lives not like the mole, continually grovel-
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ling in the earth, but, like the soaring eagle, he fixes his eye upon the heavens; he considers the present world, and the present occurrences of Providence, to be but a small part of God's wonderful administration. If it be the will of Heaven to chastize him with affliction, he acquiesces with a dutiful submission; if he is made to prosper, his heart habitually breathes forth its gratitude to God: he sees, perhaps, the common calamities of this chequered scene approaching his dwelling, and his felicity interrupted by the awakening call of some of his dearest connections to another world; but still St. Peter asks, "Who shall harm you?" The good of the gospel, the blessings which it holds forth, depend upon no contingencies: the promise of an endless state of glory and happiness with God and his Christ in another world, necessarily brings the believer's mind to the habit of devout resignation; he may feel, and he must feel as a man, but he will hope like a Christian. When it is the will of God to exercise him with trial, to lay him upon the bed of sickness, he does not view this visitation as an harm, but as a fatherly correction, intended either to do away something that is wrong in the disposition or
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the conduct, or as the necessary forerunner of that dissolution, which is to precede his admission to heaven. The Almighty has promised to be with his faithful servants, and he is with them; “I will come,” said our Saviour, “and take you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also:” and this will always be true; for although the nature of a mortal sickness may be such as not to leave a good man in a capacity to express himself fully upon the subject of religion, yet the moment that the separation of the body and the soul takes place, there will be the fullest conviction that God is faithful to his promise, and that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” This is the Christian’s grand support through the varied scenes of life, and in the moment of death; all things shall work together for good.—May you then, my brethren, as you wish to enjoy the comforts of the present world; may you, as you are anxious to meet the approbation of God, and to enjoy his favour in heaven; may you become the sincere and the constant followers of that which is good—“follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall

shall see the Lord." May the recollection that the eyes of God are against those who do evil, and of that indignation which he will finally pour upon the ungodly, deter us from all iniquity, and lead us to aspire after that genuine piety, which will most assuredly, through the infinite merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, introduce us to the future vision of God.

T H E E N D.

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PRIVATE TUITION
FOR
A FEW YOUNG GENTLEMEN,
By the Rev. J. MORTON,
At the Vicarage, in LEWISHAM, Kent.

IT has been long a disputed point with the most distinguished literary characters, whether the advantages lay on the side of a public or private education.

MR. LOCKE, indeed, was decidedly in favour of the latter; he conceived that, where an instructor has the charge of but a small number of pupils, his attention must necessarily be drawn more directly to a point, his observation on their dispositions, capacities, and propensities, be formed with a greater degree of accuracy, and the application of his abilities for their improvement afford a more flattering prospect of success.

ADMITTING, however, that in order to form the complete scholar, or to fit the man of business for the world, a public education is indispensably necessary; yet, perhaps, it will be granted, that to place children in public schools at too early an age may not be equally necessary: for it will easily occur to the consideration of parents, that in such situations a firmness of mind, and a strength of body, are requisite to enable them to share without danger in the sports, to counteract the mischiefs, or to resist the violences, of their associates. — Besides,

CHILDREN

CHILDREN of a tender age require indulgences which public schools cannot admit. They call for a degree of tenderness and attention which Gentlemen at the head of numerous and respectable academies cannot pay them. The consequences are obvious; two or three of their first years at school are fruitless; little, perhaps nothing, is done, excepting indeed that their infant minds too often become tainted with the follies, or vices, of their seniors; and such habits are acquired as resist all the labour of future years to do away.

To attempt a correspondence with the ideas of the above-named great and good man, to avoid the inconveniences of a public, and to realize those advantages which he suggests as connected with a private education, Mr. MORTON receives into his house only a few young Gentlemen, from the age of Five to Twelve years. These are constantly under his own observation; they eat at his table, and live with him in the habits of parental intimacy and friendship. By a regular application of about seven hours each day, they are made acquainted with the first principles of such parts of ancient and modern literature, as their friends are pleased to direct, or their future prospects render necessary.

